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DEFINING THE SCHISM: IMAGES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE OLD BELIEF IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN DISCOURSE

by

Elena Krevsky ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

Department of History & Classics

Edmonton, Alberta
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Defining the Schism: Images and Interpretations of the Old Belief in Late Nineteenth-Century Russian Discourse* submitted by Elena Krevsky in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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ABSTRACT

Considering national identity as a process, this dissertation has examined the explosion of interest in the Old Belief in the 1860s-1880s as one aspect of the search for the "Russian idea." On the part of the intelligentsia, it was an attempt to overcome the traditional juxtaposition of Russia and the West by immersion into authentic sources of Russianness. At a time of crisis, many men of letters looked into the past hoping that a return to an authentic Russian culture would save Russia from a constant orientation toward the West. *Raskol'niki*, the conservative rebels, for centuries holding out against the immense power of the state and the official church, attracted the attention of people from each part of the ideological spectre.

Analyzing stories about Old Believers, this dissertation deals with the undercurrent of domestic, intimately Russian literature that was not looking constantly toward Europe for approval and understanding. This work shows how a captivating, deeply personal quest for identity turned into the construction of a national image. Special attention is paid to the works of A. P. Shchapov, V. I. Kel'siev, P. I. Mel'nikov (A. Pechersky), and N. S. Leskov, among others.

This dissertation makes a distinction between the two lines in the interpretation of the Old Belief in Russian literature: the line of Mel'nikov and the line of Leskov. For Leskov, Old Believers were members of the Russian family, a part of its "old fairy tale." But it was Mel'nikov's classifying and functional quasi-bureaucratic approach that came to dominate Russian literature. With his victory, Old Belief could not be perceived as a representative of 'true Russianness' anymore. Interest in the past was lost altogether. The attention shifted to sects, especially the mystical ones. Contrary to the opinion of A.

Etkind, it has been proven that the distinction between the interpretations of Old Belief and sectarianism is necessary for an understanding of the changes in approaches to Russian national identity in the late nineteenth century. Two models of Russian religious dissent are distinguished in Mel'nikov's epic novels: Old Belief as stupidity and *Khlystovshchina* (mystical sect) as madness.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1881, distinguished Russian publisher and historian P. Bartenev inserted in his magazine a short "Note from the publisher of the *Russian Archive*. On historical novels." Following the habitual manner of comparing the Russian situation with that in Western Europe, he lamented the abundance of historical novels in Russia. This "unbridled historiographical fancy" could not hurt Europeans, he thought, because they were quite familiar with their past, whereas Russians "started their studies only yesterday," and their "popular self-consciousness" was still in its embryo.[1] He enumerated several topics still in need of elucidation, mostly listing the names of the Tsars. Interestingly, the first person that he mentioned was Nikon, a Russian patriarch (1652-1658), whose name is closely connected with the amendment of church books and the persecution of Old Believers.

As a result of the church books' amendment, which began in the seventeenth century, some Russians broke away from the church. The disagreement was over seemingly minor points: how to spell the name of Jesus, how many times to repeat *alleluia*, or how many fingers to use in making the sign of the cross. As one of the writers noted, this was a movement of simple people "whose whole faith was in those two fingers." The official church was trying to bring its books and rituals into conformity with Greek originals, while Old Believers adhered to the native Orthodoxy of their forefathers. They suffered persecutions, exile, and death. Entire Old Believer communities, when approached by government troops would lock themselves up in wooden dwellings and set them alight. But the persecutions did not destroy the movement; the number of dissenters continued to increase during the subsequent centuries. Vigilantly seeing to the preservation of ancient customs and rituals for more than two hundred years, they were regarded by some as the bearers of pure, untarnished Russian culture. Because of their adherence to the past, to the old books, and to old Russian ways, they were called Old Believers, Old Ritualists or Schismatics (Raskol'niki).

What is the connection between the old schism and Russian self-perception of the late-nineteenth century? There are some firm canons for approaching Russian national consciousness or identity. In Michael Cherniavsky's classic *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths*, two major pillars of Russian identity are defined as the Orthodoxy (the myth of 'Holy Russia') and the belief in a Christ-like Tsar. Leaning on this primary significance of the Orthodoxy for Russian culture, many studies of Russian intellectual history incessantly explore the West as the only significant Other of Russian national self-perception. However, in the late nineteenth century, after Herzen's *From the Other Shore*, Leont'ev's articles, and Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer*, when even the thought that "only banality is all-European" had become trite, the West lost its aura of intellectual superiority. The search came closer to home.

Another conspicuous contradiction of Russian national consciousness that received a considerable amount of attention was the one between the "narod" (the people) and the "intelligentsia." Recently, Cathy A. Frierson studied the image of the people created by the populist authors in the 1860's and 1870's. She stressed the two-fold connotation of the term "narod" ("simple people" or "people") for educated Russians:

---

[1] P. B. "Ob istoricheskikh romahakh. Zametka izdatelia Russkogo Arkhiva", *Russkii Arkhiv* no. 3 (1881): 214.

that of "the other" and of the people as a nation.[2] The starting point of our argument is almost identical: if we see Orthodoxy as the core of popular self-perception in Russia, a similar duality is conspicuous in the images of Old-Believers: they are alien, strange and, at the same time, genuinely Russian.

But there is more to their otherness. It springs not only from the popular character of their religiosity (which refers us again to the 'big picture' oppositions such as 'official versus popular religion' and 'the intelligentsia versus the people') but also from their adherence to the past, from their being a "stony splinter" of ancient Russian history. This nuance gives them an additional quality and distinguishes them from one indiscernible whole of "the people," making one's attitude to the past an important component of this image. Such grandiose juxtapositions as 'Russia and the West', and 'the people and the intelligentsia' are traditional in Russian thought. It is no wonder that illustrious and thorough elaborations of these topics by Slavophiles and Westernizers, as well as by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Blok, and Merezhkovsky among others have become the focus of many significant works.

This work is an attempt to erode such clear-cut visions of Russian contradictions. I am certainly not the first one to do so. Jeffrey Brooks, in his analysis of *lubok* literature (cheap editions for the people), pays special attention to the problem of changing Russian identity. According to him, "the question of what it meant to be Russian" was prominent in this kind of literature. He notes that the emphasis had been shifted in the late nineteenth century from loyalty to the tsar and Orthodoxy to pride in a mighty empire:

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[2] Cathy A. Frierson *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993): 33.

> Obligations to Church and state still remained, but they no longer served as the primary expression of national identity... In the newer view, the most humble Great Russian was invited to think of himself as generally assisting the smaller and culturally backward nationalities that comprised the empire. This provided a sense of pride and status congruent psychologically with the other changes that were part of the greater geographic and economic mobility of common Great Russians at the end of the nineteenth century.[3]

Brooks explores changes in Russian self-image by showing their intricate connections with Russian colonialism, the 'spatial dimension' of Russian identity, so to speak, whereas its 'temporal dimension,' the question of popular attitudes towards the Russian past, remains untouched. However, the problem of historical memory seems to be at least equally important at this time of Russian self-recognition. We will tackle this issue by examining the theme of religious schism in Russian literature, in particular, the image of Old Believers and sectarians. 'The Great Russian Literature' is not the subject of our account -- its margins are. Surprisingly, if we turn to the writers whom B. Eikhenbaum called "the younger line, whose work was suppressed and overlooked in the Russian prose of the Dostoevsky and Tolstoy period"[4] (Dal', Mel'nikov-Pechersky, Leskov), each representative of this group shows a keen interest in and profound knowledge of the problem of '*Raskol'niki*.' Our sources are the books of popular but 'second-rate' writers, along with the articles in 'thick' journals, historical and ethnographical research. The choice of the sources will be explained in more detail later in the introduction when we discuss methodology.

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[3] J. Brooks *When Russia Learned to Read* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985), 245.

Until the 1860's, one could hardly meet a '*Raskol'nik*' in Russian literature. During the reign of Nicholas I, using this word in print was prohibited. A. F. Haxthausen, who traveled in Russia in 1843-1844, mentioned Old Believers and sectarians in his famous book. He was impressed by mystery that encircled this topic. Although he admitted not having "anything like complete information regarding it," he could easily boast: "I know more on this subject than most other foreigners, or even the majority of the Russians themselves, the officials and government authorities not excepted."[5] Disregard and oppression were the main characteristics of government policies toward Old Believers. Until the reign of Alexander II, Russian society was almost ignorant of the *Raskol'niki*; high officials sincerely believed that their number was negligible.[6] It was at the beginning of this reign that along with a relative easing of the Old Believers' condition, the imperial resolution of January 20, 1858 stressed that an insufficient amount of data concerning the schism was available.[7] P. I. Mel'nikov, one of the main authorities on the subject, started his highly popular "Letters on the Schism" (1862) with the assertion that neither the administration, nor society, nor even Old Believers themselves, knew what the essence of the two hundred year old schism was.[8] During the next twenty years, scholars and officials showered the Russian public with accounts of the Old Believers' historical roots, creative work and current conditions.[9]

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[4] Boris Eikhenbaum "O proze Kuzmina", in *O literature* (Moskva: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1987): 348.

[5] A. F. von Haxthausen *The Russian Empire, its People, Institutions, and Resources*, vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1856): 247.

[6] V. V. Andreev *Raskol i ego znachenie v narodnoi russkoi istorii* ([SPb, 1870], Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1965, reprint): 352-353. Andreev cited examples showing that the number of Old Believers in Nikolaevan census was underestimated by about ten times.

[7] Ibid., p. 365.

[8] P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pechersky) "Pis'ma o raskole", in Sobranie Sochinenii v 6-ti tomakh, t. 6 (Moskva: Pravda, 1963): 193.

[9] V. V. Andreev *Raskol i ego znachenie v russkoi narodnoi istorii* , SPb., 1870, N. Barsov *Duchovnye stichi sekty liudei Bozhiikh.* SPb., 1870; G. Esipov *Raskol'nich'i dela XVIII stoletiia*. SPb., 1861-63; I. Popov

Importantly for our investigation, the period of the late nineteenth century includes the cultural and social upheaval in Old Russia when traditional social groups could hardly find their place in a quickly changing society, and many old norms and values were revised. Rapid social, cultural, and political changes introduced by the Great Reforms made traditional national ideals questionable, leaving no place for romantic beliefs of the Slavophile type. These tendencies resulted in an almost complete rupture with the past in the early twentieth century when prominent historian Mikhail Gershenzon wrote: "Unlike Slavophiles, we are growing in a different way – catastrophically."[10] A feverish search for some pillars of national identity in the past preceded these laments. It was this search that Bartenev described in his 'note on historical novels.' It is this search that we are trying to trace and analyze.

For an average enlightened nineteenth-century publicist, the problem was simple and self-explanatory: Old Belief as a fruit of ignorance, as a meaningless love of the old times, and as a dull adherence to stony customs was doomed. It was obvious that the enlightenment would eventually crush ignorance and thereby Old Belief would lose its basis. But even for such optimistic critics, the problem of the true Russianness of Old Believers was important. If they were to be ultimately defeated, Russian society stood to

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Sbornik dlia istorii staroobriadstva v 2-kh t. Moskva, 1864; N. I. Kostomarov "Istoriia raskola u raskol'nikov", *Vestnik Evropy* 1871, no. 4; F. V. Livanov *Raskol'niki I ostrozhniki* 4t. (1873); P. I. Mel'nikov-*Pechersky* "Pis'ma o raskole", *Severnaia Pchela* 1862 no. 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, "Staroobriadcheskie arkhierei i Ocherki popovshchiny", *Russkii Vestnik* 1863-66; *Sbornik Kel'sieva* 2 vols, London 1860-61; A. P. Shchapov *Russkiii raskol staroobriadchestva.* Kazan', 1859, *Zemstvo i raskol* SPb, 1861, *Umstvennyia napravleniia russkogo raskola.* Andreev states that there were plenty of articles published during the sixties in the church journals (*Khristianskoe Chtenie* , *Pravoslavnyi Sobesednik, Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie, Dukh Khristianina*).

[10] Mikhail O. Gershenzon *Griboedovskaia Moskva. P. Ia. Chaadaev. Ocherki proshlogo* (Moskva: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1989): 315.

lose this last stronghold of genuine Russian culture. So in some disputes on the schism, one can easily trace concern for Russian spiritual sustainability.

But Old Believers were not the only representatives of popular religious dissent. Whoever was trying to write about the Old Belief in the late nineteenth century, was suddenly exposed to the whole world of popular religiosity. Such an exposure was bound to destroy the wholesome image of the Russian people. The sects were very different in their character, demeanor, and dogmas. Many Russian intellectuals were enchanted by this alien world. Recently, popular Russian historian Alexander Etkind told the story of this enchantment in his new book called *Khlyst.*[11] Several interesting works studying various religious groups in Imperial Russia appeared in the 1990s,[12] but *Khlyst* is the most important for us since it analyzes popular religion in connection with its representations in high culture. Etkind asserted that it was exactly in the texts depicting the sectarian world, where the Russian revolution was prepared and shaped.

An amazed reader quickly discovers that almost every prominent Russian writer of that period was fascinated with sectarians, especially with one particular movement that gave the book under review its title (*Khlyst* means a 'whip' and also a member of the popular sect). 'The God's People' was self-appellation of this sect. Danila Filippovich, a runaway soldier, founded the mystical sect of God's People in the seventeenth century. It was also called *Khristovshchina* (Christ-Faith) or – disdainfully – *Khlystovshchina* (which is often translated as Flagellants). The members of the sect did not sever their ties with the Orthodox Church; they attended all the important services. But they also gathered for secret meetings where they prayed, sang, danced (spinned), hoping that the Holy Spirit would descend upon them. This joint spinning was the most characteristic feature of the *Khlysty*'s ritual, well known to the general public. There were also rumors that each of the meetings ended with the members fornicating in ecstasy. These rumors were never sufficiently proved. An important trait of the sect was the deification of leaders: a man would be considered Christ, a woman – the Virgin.

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[11] Aleksandr Etkind *Khlyst (Sekty, literatura i revoliutsiia).* Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998.

[12] See for example:. Laura Engelstein *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom. A Russian Folktale* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); E. Clay "The Theological Origins of the Christ-Faith [Khristovshchina]," *Russian History/Histoire Russe,* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 1998): 21-41; N. Breyfogle "Building Dukhoboria: Religious Culture, Social Identity, and Russian Colonization in Transcaucasia, 1845-1895," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes Ethnique au Canada* 27, no. 3 (1995): 24-51.

The real histories of many religious groups intertwine in Etkind's book with the stories of their representations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russian discourse, but *Khlysty* are at the center of his attention. He discusses in detail their *radenie,* the ritual of the *Khlysty*'s clandestine meetings, in which collective praying, singing and spinning bring about the soaring and fusion of individual spirits. Etkind directly associates *radenie* as dissolution in a collective with the idea of 'mir', 'obshchina' (community). Only *radenie* is a more radical mechanism in which "sectarians joined into communal feeling in a more intensive and unusually literal way."[13]

Sometimes it seems that the author's aim is to rewrite the Russian cultural and literary history of the turn of this century, to present each significant literary figure of this period in a different light. Celebrated poems sound anew; widely known events acquire altered meanings; familiar figures prove to be affected by strange influences. To give but one example, let us turn to the remarkable figure of Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Soloviev. One of the most well known episodes of Soloviev's biography is his public lecture in 1881 in which he appealed for pardon regarding the regicides of March

1, 1881. This plea, according to many accounts, cost the brilliant young professor his career.

But Etkind maintains that this appeal was not the only reason that Soloviev was dismissed. In his lecture, Soloviev juxtaposed "personal enlightenment" and "popular belief," giving to the latter the highest authority in the religious sphere. The word *Khlystovshchina* was not mentioned, but clearly Soloviev referred to the *Khlysty*'s perception when he talked about the "living God" of the simple people. So the young professor was suspected of being not only in sympathy with regicides but also in sympathy with popular heretical sects. Etkind affirms that the sympathy with heretics could have been a decisive factor for Pobedonostsev, who handled the scandal.

Many other unexpected details, intriguing quotations, and archival revelations make this book fascinating reading, but its general framework proves to be traditional: the cultural contrast, contradiction between the people and the intelligentsia. Even the reference to Edward Said's *Orientalism* is not refreshing: the people were perceived by the intelligentsia as the Other: "In Russia, relations between the intelligentsia and the people represented a special version of colonization and afterwards, decolonization."[14] Aligning with the approach developed in *Orientalism* means sharing its pitfalls; one of them is excessive generalization. Stuffing diverse materials (ranging from the early nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century) into one dichotomy necessarily means some disregard for historical perspective. The opposition 'people-intelligentsia' does not provide the theoretical space necessary to explain why in the 1880s the intelligentsia was mostly interested in the Old Believers, casting *Khlysty* aside as heretics and fanatics,

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[13] Aleksandr Etkind *Khlyst*, p. 81.
[14] Ibid., p. 59.

whereas 20 years later the Old Believers' image faded and *Khlysty* enchanted the intelligentsia.

To make his position logically consistent, Etkind needs to prove that the intelligentsia perceived the world of Russian sectarianism indiscriminately, as a whole, that differences between the sects were unimportant and vague even for the sectarians themselves. He insists, for example, "in historical context, the juxtaposition of Old Believers and sectarians has no prospect." In historical context, probably, but in the context of the Russian discourse of the late nineteenth century this juxtaposition seems absolutely necessary. One simply has to turn to the novels of Mel'nikov-Pechersky, who was the first authority on these matters in Russian literature. These two movements are certainly juxtaposed in his narratives. Later in the book Etkind demonstrates how Prishvin (p. 467), Remizov (p.619), and Bonch-Bruevich (p. 637) perceived the profound difference between the two movements. But he also refers his readers to the article by Ronald Vroon who does not explore this difference.[15]

But the most interesting thing is that later in the book Etkind juxtaposes them himself, quite unwittingly. Discussing the origins of the image of Marina Zotova, Khlysts' Virgin from the third volume of Gor'ky's *The Life of Klim Samgin*, he adduces the following argument. Zotova does not have a female prototype in the world of Russian sectarianism. But Nikolai Bugrov, millionaire and Old Believer, known mostly from Gorky's descriptions, is a similar figure: "Impressions of his personality, so well remembered by the writer, were transformed with help of systematic operations: a man was turned into a woman, a fright into a beauty, a debauchee into a virgin, *an Old*

Believer into a Khlystovka."[16] It is hard to imagine more direct opposites than man and woman, fright and beauty. By including Old Believers and *Khlysty* into this line of oppositions, Etkind not only demonstrates that Gorky had seen a great difference between the two, but also tacitly admits this difference himself.

The comparison of the image of the Old Belief with images of other popular sects, God's People in particular, gives an innovative edge to our research: so much ink had been used in writing about the *narod* (the people) as one indivisible entity that such differentiation should enrich our picture of Russian self-perception in the late nineteenth century. This is why it seems natural to approach this subject in terms of the formation of national identity and start by defining our theoretical approach to this problem.

Identity as a Process: a Never-ending Story

Nationalism has been studied by the academic community for a long time, while the problem of national identity (understood as a continuing process of search for national self-definition) came to the fore only recently. When one begins to consider the national identity question one immediately stumbles upon 'unbearable lightness' of approaching the field where *the* classic text has not been written yet. So, instead of following some masterpiece of a methodological approach (read: instead of conveniently hiding behind some wide 'classic' back), one has to begin with definitions. On the other hand, there are a lot of respectable scholars who examine the problem of national identity

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[15] Ronald Vroon "The Old Belief and Sectarianism as Cultural Models in the Silver Age," Robert H. Hughes and Irina Paperno, eds. *Christianity and the Eastern Slavs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

[16] Etkind *Khlyst*, p. 497. The italics are mine.

as devoid of original theoretical significance, a subordinate question in the more general study of nationalism.

Roughly speaking, all interpretations of 'national identity' may be divided into two large groups depending on which word is emphasized in the aforementioned phrase: 'national' or 'identity'. The word 'national' is more important for those who study nationalism as a *phenomenon*, something pervasive, indispensable, and basic for the modern world. So basic, in fact, that the quest of a student of intellectual history is considered to be futile. As E. Gellner puts it, "we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets".[17]

If one considers nationalism just "a phenomenon, which springs directly and inevitably from our shared condition"[18], the idea of national identity is easily swallowed by the pervasive nationalism. Nations seem to be "invented" by intellectuals and then go through the period modernization and homogenization. As a result, Gellner's nationalism is faceless. "Homogeneity, literacy, anonymity are the key traits", he insists.[19] Appearing as a subordinate in the sociological model of nationalism, the notion of national identity necessarily assumes this impersonality. The model of the homogeneous, anonymous nationalism rejects acting, feeling, and thinking individual. The whole drama of the quest for self-definition is lost in this grandiose picture of social, cultural, and political contemporary processes merging into one big mechanism of nationalist state.

L. Greenfeld also starts her book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* by trying to explain national identity as an epiphenomenon of nationalism. In so doing she fences it off, detaches it from the other types of identity. Although the word *nationalism* appears in the title, the book consists of five essays on the formation of five different national identities. L. Greenfeld warns that "national identity should not be confused with other types of identity ... and cannot be explained in general terms or in terms which may explain any other type of identity".[20] Why be so scared not only of the comparison of different types of identities, but even of the explanation of national identity *in general terms*?

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[17] E. Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1983): 125
[18] Ibid., p. 124.

Anthony D. Smith, on the contrary, begins his book *National Identity* with the interpretation of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King* as a play about Oedipus' quest for identity demonstrating that each of the discovered 'selves' had a social dimension. Tribulations of the ancient king let the author introduce national identity as one type of collective cultural identity among many others. He does not sever all ties between them, as L. Greenfeld does. For him, multidimensionality is the main characteristic of the national identity, which, therefore, can absorb and express several other identities:

> National identity and the nation are the complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components -- ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths, and traditions that may or may not find expression in states of their own, *but are entirely different from the purely legal and bureaucratic ties of the state*... It is this very multidimensionality that has made national identity such a flexible and persistent force in modern life and politics.[21]

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[19] Ibid., p. 138.

[20] L. Greenfeld *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993):12.

[21] Anthony D. Smith *National Identity* (Reno, Las Vegas, London: University of Nevada Press, 1991): 15. The italics are mine. L. Greenfeld argues that it is necessary to distinguish between national, ethnic and unique identities. In my opinion, this distinction may be appropriate for the period of the formation of national identities. However, it is only A. D. Smith's idea of multidimensionality of national identity that helps us to accommodate the concept of national identity to the complexity of 'postmodern condition'.

In other words, Russianness (as well as Frenchness, Englishness and so on) does exist, and it exists not only as a necessary function of the political 'phenomenon', nationalism, but also as a self-image, a standpoint which may have nothing or very little to do with politics. Taken from the point of view of an individual, national identity may be described as a mechanism used by its adherents to orient them in the social world. E Gellner admits the existence of this mechanism, but stresses its compulsory and standardized character in the modern world:

> Exo-socialization, the production and reproduction of men outside the local intimate unit, is now the norm, and must be so. The imperative of exo-socialization is the main clue why state and culture *must* now be linked, whereas in the past their connection was thin, fortuitous, varied, loose, and often minimal. Now it is unavoidable.[22]

A. D. Smith, on the contrary, emphasizes the 'lack of congruence' between the state and the nation. Speaking about the external and internal functions of national identity he cites among the latter ones socialization, providing a social bond and "a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of collective personality and its distinctive culture".[23] He describes this individual quest for one's self as "the key to national identity, but... also the element that has attracted most doubt and skepticism".[24]

This skepticism is quite understandable. Although the category of identity had long and respectable history in philosophical studies, its dissemination in social sciences is connected with psychoanalysis. Erik Erikson introduced this category into the latter field. The popularity of his books was conducive to the formation of an interdisciplinary slang, in which "national," "cultural," or "ethnic" identity was a central notion. Erikson characterized identity formation as a "lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society."[25]

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[22] Ibid., p. 38.

[23] Anthony D. Smith *National Identity*, p. 17.

Social scientists are not always accurate with this term. Even though national identity exists in and through individuals, it seems erroneous to move freely from personal to social level and ascribe to a society feelings and thoughts of an individual. The case in point is the treatment of Russian national identity in L. Greenfeld's book: the author considers "*ressentiment* – the existential envy of the West" as the most important factor in crystallization of Russian identity.[26] The difference between social and personal level of identity is ignored in this reasoning. As a result the society becomes subjective: it feels envy.

Does a historian need to guard himself against the danger of personification of national identity? Fortunately and contrary to what E. Gellner says, life is never permeated with politics. It is through families and other 'local intimate units,' through the net of informal contacts, not only through formal education, that the sense of national identity is acquired. And that is why a historian should study the formation of national identity on an individual level, in connection with the concrete historical situation in the country. Paying attention to similar features of identity in different individuals, we have to compare also their social status and personal circumstances. The historian's task is to

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[24] Ibid. Regrettably, A. D. Smith does not develop this line of discourse any further, he only adds, that "the quest for the national self and the individual's relationship to it remains the most baffling element in the nationalist project".

[25] Erik Erikson *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959): 113.

find out the distinctive features of the identity in question, as applied to concrete individuals and social groups, at the very concrete historical moment, letting sociologists continue their search for theoretical generalizations.

The aforesaid may sound like just another song on the subject of "East is East and West is West..." Sociological predilections for patterns and molds are as honorable as an intellectual historian's craving for individuality. Only the word 'identity' looks very strange placed side by side with the impersonal sociological 'isms' (even if it is nationalism as a 'specific' identity). In fact, my own understanding of the difference between nationalism and national identity was formed under the influence of symbolic anthropology, especially Gavin I. Langmuir's distinction between religion and religiosity as 'fixity' and 'fluidity', where the first is a characteristic of groups and second -- of individuals.[27] Langmuir insists, "symbols acquire meaning only as individuals create, connect and use them to encode and communicate their experiences".[28]

Similarly, classical nationalist doctrine can exalt certain symbols and images, but it is an individual who chooses those ones that are relevant to his or her personal experience and interprets them in accordance with this experience. His social belonging can be a strong influence in this choice. The belief in existence of something eternal and unshakable (God, Virtue, Nation) should not be confused with the search for identity, especially at a time when a national image exists only as a problem, not as some clear,

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[26] L. Greenfeld *Nationalism*, p. 250.
[27] Gavin I. Langmuir *History, Religion and Anti-Semitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1990): 161.
[28] Ibid., p. 164.

ideal model. Stuart Hall has called this situation "a new settlement between identity and difference"[29], thus indicating fluidity as an essential part of the contemporary identities.

This suggestion is very unusual. Logically speaking, it does not have much sense: how can we even speak about identity, if it is not something solid and wholesome, if it is not the opposite of difference. Moreover, if the concept of difference (change and difference are certainly meant by fluidity) represents an essential feature of identity under this "new settlement," our identity is always ambivalent. So, Hall conceptualizes identity as an ongoing *process of identification*[30], not as some stable essential structure. For him, understanding of the past is the most important feature of the ethnic identity.

Of course, such an identity is constructed. But even if it is constructed as some state monolith imagined by E. Gellner, one has to comprehend the dialectical structure of national identity. On the individual level, the aim of the search for identity is self-discovery. National identity is constructed by concrete individuals on the basis of their own experience and some concrete historical studies. Stuart Hall sees this new principle of construction as a feature of the post-modernity, a characteristic of the twentieth century. His personal example, being a Jamaica-born Black British intellectual, is an illustration of the possible complicity of choices. Uncertainty about personal origin and belonging might sharpen the theoretical interest in the identity question. Erikson, who was the son of a Dane, but was raised by the Jewish stepfather, also mentions his difficulties: "I was referred to as a "goy" in my stepfather's temple; while to my schoolmates I was a "Jew."[31]

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[29] Stuart Hall "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference", *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996): 349.

[30] Ibid., p. 344.

[31] Erik H. Erikson *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975): 27.

But our assertion is that identity can also become a problem on the social level when the past has become problematic. The first example that comes to mind is, of course, the time of *perestroika*, when interest in history was overwhelming. There was a run on the books about the October revolution and Stalinist years. But seventy years of living in a "brave new world" have left their trace. At first, confusion and bitterness were the major results of all revelations. Many publicists wrote that the nation ceased to be Russian many years ago and had become Soviet. Nobody was sure what it meant to be Russian.

The situation in the 1860s and later was very similar and not only because one could often encounter the word "glasnost" on the journal pages during those years. We have already mentioned the confusion and uncertainty that were brought about by the Great Reforms. Another resemblance can be found in the immense interest in history, in the growing number of publications. History was muted, censored under Nicholas I. The whole eighteenth century, especially the time of Peter the Great, was under prohibition. The burden of censorship had become especially heavy after 1848, during the notorious "gloomy seven years" (1848-1855). Only official historians could publish their odes to the Russian tsars. And just as the NKVD and its Gulag were at the center of public interest during the late 1980s, in the 1860s hundreds of publications were describing the deeds of Peter the Great and his *Tainaia Kantseliariia.* Investigations, tortures, and escapes filled the pages. It is clear why Old Believers received so much attention: they suffered more than anyone during those years.

M. I. Semevsky, for example, was a very popular author. From 1859 to 1870, he published more than forty works in sixteen magazines, most of them about the eighteenth century. His first publication appeared, when he was twenty-three years old. He wanted to write about the "crowd," about the "small people," who were usually forgotten by historians. Denunciations and anonymous letters, inquiries and statements, protocols of questionings, cross-examinations and interrogations under torture (*zastenochnye dokumenty*) comprised the corpus of his sources. Semevskii was only one of a cohort of historians who started to work on these materials during the 1860s.

The 1860s were similar to the *perestroika* time in one more sense: the interest in the previously "closed" materials was often superficial. So when all the richness of popular religious dissent started to be discovered, the Old Believers soon yielded in popularity to such "queer" sects as Khlysts and Emasculates. I chose to juxtapose the interest of Russian intelligentsia in these two groups of religious dissent and to study the difference, from 1860s to the end of the 1880s. The image of the Old Believers is central to my work. This very particular problem of how educated Russians were discovering and defining their roots and their past through the debates about the essence of the Old Belief might seem trivial. But it acquires a different dimension in the 1880s, when Old Believers and sectarians step out into fiction pages and celebrated pictures. Now not they, but their images greatly influence the shaping of Russian identity.

These examples are cited here in order to reinforce our understanding of national identity as a process. Even if it exists as a monolithic social model at any given time, still, it is constantly recreated by individual efforts. At the time of uncertainly, of crisis, several alternative models usually exist. So we are going to study works on Old Belief as such attempts to create an alternative model. Special attention will be paid to personal stories of those writers whose works on Old Belief were especially influential for Russian self-discovery. Did they reject the traditional model? What features of the Old Belief did they deem important and representative of Russianness?

Several Notes on Methodology and Structure of the Work

Our story starts in the late 1850s – early 1860s when historians, ethnographers, and populist publicists brought to the Russian public information about the previously hidden world of sectarianism. These materials were published mostly in the periodical press. But after that, during the 1870s and 1880s, sectarians appeared on the pages of works of fiction, on canvasses, and on stage; these appearances are central for the dissertation. Images of sectarians and Old Believers became embodiments of writers' thoughts about national religion, national roots, and national image. This choice of fiction as a major source brought about a serious methodological predicament. If fiction is at the center of my attention, should I follow some literary theory in order to approach my sources adequately? It was clear for me from the very beginning that traditional literary history will not satisfy the needs of this investigation. An interdisciplinary approach was needed, since I did not study literature *per se*, but literature in its connections with historic, ethnographic, religious, and other texts. There were no impenetrable walls in the Russian discourse of the late nineteenth century.

I chose as a methodological model the work of Russian literary scholar and philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, "the unity of culture" is more important than corporate borders between different humanitarian disciplines. He interpreted language and literature as the most important sources for comprehending social structure and history. It is through literature of the period that one can analyze its everyday life and habitual opinions. Bakhtin's work, especially his study of Rabelais, shows that one can hear voices of the people while reading popular fiction. Moreover, it shows how literature not only reflects, but also constitutes social relations and typical characters.[32] So, following Bakhtin, we will consider literary texts as reliable sources of social knowledge and try to recreate Russian identity formation through works of art. This approach is essentially historical, but also requires an analysis of synchronic relations. In fact, some scholars even argue that "the chronotope, along with Bakhtin's other key categories – heteroglossia, dialogic narrative and polyphony – may be seen as a critique of historicism from the perspectives of a new conception of historicity."[33]

If we compare imaginative literature with scholarly works, we should agree that imaginative literature "is constructed from the details of ordinary existence."[34] So, writers might borrow facts from scholarly articles, but in their narration these facts intertwine with the threads of everyday life and, most often, are shown through their reflection in public opinion. As Bakhtin's work on Rabelais has shown, high culture is always in contact with popular tradition. Since masses did not leave any written documents, high culture may serve as a mediator, which indirectly reveals many secrets of popular culture. But for this work, another direction of this communication is important: constant borrowing from the popular by the high culture, especially at the time of crisis.

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[32] One can find an illustration of this thesis in Leskov's article "Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii v ego romane "Chto delat?" Leskov assures that the whole cohort of young Russian nihilists was created single-handedly by I. S. Turgenev. Turgenev noticed a tendency in the society, created the image of Bazarov and used the word 'nihilism' in *Fathers and Sons*. After this novel, Russian youngsters "started to copy Bazarov." Therefore, concludes Leskov, it was not propaganda of radical journals that begot nihilism. It was the liberal Turgenev who created it by giving it a slogan and an image. (N. S. Leskov *Sobranie sochinenii v 11-ti tomakh*, t. 10 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1958): 16-17.

[33] S. Aronovitz *Dead Artists Live Theories and Other Cultural Problems* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994): 145.

[34] Ibid., p. 141.

The principle of dialogue is a key to Bakhtin' s approach to culture and to understanding relations between a society and an individual "self." Since each self grows to understand the outside world through its relations with others, any thinking is a dialogue, and, therefore, there is no strict boundary between "literature" and "life." "In dialogism," as Bakhtin's biographer, M. Holquist, puts it, "literature is seen as an activity that plays an important role in defining relations between individuals and society."[35] There is constant interchange between everyday life and literature. In fact, literature alone can represent all possible aspects of human existence. That is why the analysis of literary works is central for this study.

Again, Bakhtin's initial conviction is that "any work of literature is inwardly, immanently sociological."[36] But when he analyses Dostoevsky's dialogues, he realizes that Dostoevsky's heroes do not turn to any social forces or connections: it is the "naked I" that is arguing. They converse "directly on the ground of last questions." Why? Bakhtin explains: "Dostoevsky's heroes are coming from accidental families and from accidental collectives. They are deprived from normal, matter-of-course contacts, in which their lives and their relations would take place."[37] For Bakhtin, this loneliness of Dostoevsky's heroes is the result of social and spiritual crisis caused by the reforms, "an expression of social disorientation of the *raznochinnaia* intelligentsia,"[38] which was trying to find its way in the world on its own risk, without the firm support of tradition and old order. Dostoevsky's heroes, we should add, are torn out of Russian history; they rarely discuss it.

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[35] M. Holquist *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990): 86.

[36] M. M. Bakhtin *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1979): 181.

[37] Ibid., pp. 186-7.

[38] The word '*raznochintsy*' might be translated as 'people of various ranks.' It refers to the whole stratum of Russian society, which develops after the Great Reforms: intellectuals who did not belong to the nobility.

The emphasis on spiritual crisis is very important here. Bakhtin insists that literature is a reflection of social connections, but what if all these traditional connections are destroyed? This is exactly what happened as a result of the Great Reforms. Then, mighty talent of Dostoevsky engages in the search for solutions of "last questions," but at the same time many authors turn to history and tradition in order to find answers there. The late seventeenth century with the church schism, *strel'tsy* uprisings, and coming to power of Peter the Great was at the center of public discourse. We will follow these discussions starting from the late 1850s to the late 1880s, paying attention to the changing contexts of the debates as well as to personal social and literary stakes of the authors.

The first chapter should play an auxiliary role: it introduces the reader to the history of the schism. It seems necessary to begin with such systematic introduction in order to free the following chapters from constant historical demarches into previous centuries. This chapter also reviews government policies concerning the schism before the period of the Great Reforms.

The second chapter introduces two participants of the debate on the question of the schism and its role in Russian history (A. P. Shchapov and V. I. Kel'siev). It starts with giving some background of social and spiritual situation of Russian intelligentsia during the 1860s. What was labeled as 'revolutionary situation' by Marxists, what was a period of great hopes for liberals, also was, in fact, the period of great despair for many intellectuals. We chose only two voices, Shchapov and Kel'siev, because their writings and their personal circumstances drew a considerable amount of attention in the 1860s. Both of them could be called *Raznochintsy*, both of them turned to Russian history, and especially to Old Belief at this time of spiritual uncertainty.

Chapters 3 and 4 are central for the whole study. Analyzing works of two popular writers, P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pechersky) and N. S. Leskov, these two chapters demonstrate how folklore motifs burst into Russian literature as a "mighty wave of popular-historic time."[39] After their works, Russian past was not locked in itself anymore, it became a part of literary process (and therefore, following Bakhtin's logic, a part of everyday life) not only through reproduction of popular songs and tales, as in Mel'nikov's ever-popular novels, but also through incorporation of traditional popular worldview into the very gist of narrative in Leskov's stories. Well-known arguments about Russian destiny, so popular in the 1870s and 1880s, are used as a background for our analysis in order to show that works of such authors as Mel'nikov and Leskov created a new context for this kind of discussions. Following Bakhtin, we consider works of art and literature as complete utterances in this all-Russian dialogue concerning the schism and Russian destiny.

If we were to pigeonhole these utterances, Dostoevsky's works would gravitate towards the realm of old-style intellectual history: at the time of confusion he relied solely on his own thoughts and experiences. Even hardships and misery of his heroes often serve to prove or disprove a certain idea. At the very same time, other authors, like Mel'nikov and Leskov use folklore, popular language, and popular worldview as their guiding lights, so their books are rooted in the past, in the popular tradition, and therefore, they are rather a part of the domain of cultural history. I realize that since Foucault's "archeology of knowledge" and "modes of discourse" this distinction between cultural and intellectual history is somewhat outdated, but it is important for us to emphasize the difference: Dostoevsky certainly gravitates to high culture, Mel'nikov and Leskov – to popular culture.

For the first part of the fifth chapter, the Bakhtinian concept of "chronotope" is essential. It demonstrates how forcefully images of Old Believers burst into Russian art in the 1880s drawing the attention of the society not only to some particular historical events, but also to those *places* were the events occurred. I have in mind, specifically, Musorgsky's opera *Khovanshchina* and Surikov's pictures "Morning of the Execution of the Strel'tsy" and "Boyarynia Morozova."

The second part of the last chapter analyzes works and letters of the "official" historian of the schism, N. I. Subbotin. In a way, the discussion of Subbotin's position completes our argument. In the first chapter, the government policies concerning the schism were reviewed. This last etude demonstrates that policy-makers hardly changed their attitude. Notwithstanding more than thirty years of discussions and interpretations, the main characteristic of the official perspective on the Old Belief was one of fear. One can be assured again that the officialdom turned a deaf ear to public discussions.

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[39] Bakhtin, *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva*, p. 234. With this expression Bakhtin characterizes the discovery of folklore for literature that occurred in the English literature in the late eighteenth century. Folklore has a different time sense, it enriches literature with new meanings.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF THE SCHISM AND ITS REFLECTIONS IN POPULAR MEMORY

When the history of the schism was rediscovered in the second half of the nineteenth century, the interpretation of every single event was questionable; the role of each important figure seemed moot. In order to address these controversies later in the work, we need to start with a historical sketch of the schism, paying special attention to its origin, main figures and denominations, as well as to its overall "spirit."

Lack of enlightenment was often cited as a major source of the schism. Hierarchs were sometimes compelled to ordain illiterate priests, so that people would not die without absolution. Russian historian P. Miliukov juxtaposed loftiness of the ascetic ideal, which Russia adopted from Byzantium, to the lack of education and pagan worldview of the Russian people. Gradually, priests and congregations came to a similar understanding of their religion: they grew accustomed to the identification of rituals with the essence of the faith. In this disproportionate importance of outward forms and low level of literacy some authors see the roots of the schism.

Many scholars also spotted these roots in the sixteenth century, in the influence emanated from the Volokolamsk monastery and from its hegumen, Josef Sanin. Joseph and his supporters were called *grabbers* or *possessors* (*stiazhateli*) for their excessive attention to practical affairs. The system of strict discipline, rigid control, and outward piety created several generations of monks who occupied the highest positions in Russian Orthodox hierarchy and disseminated the ideas of Joseph. "Preservation of the old times, diligent adherence to the form, to the letter, to the ritual were characteristic features of their course."[1] Another important feature strengthened by Ivan the Terrible and later by Michael Romanov was a close union of the church and the state. The Russian church needed the state's support because of the low level of popular religiosity. Russian people were mostly illiterate, their priests also could not boast of excellent education (in fact, some of them were semi-literate), that is why the church found a use for the patronage of the state as well as for the magic firmness of formalism. The priests were not inspiring spiritual leaders; they saw carrying out the rites as the gist of their duties. For simple people knowing the Scriptures, "religion was turned into a row of praying formulas, which acquired some magic sense."[2]

G. Esipov, who started to write popular stories about the schism in the 1860s, explained why it was so important to study the position and origin of the first schism-teachers (*raskolouchiteli*). They were close to the people, and expressed a popular point of view. This was the secret of their wide success. It is through studying of their writings that one can perceive the attitude of the masses. Nikon strongly believed in the necessity of the book amendments and liturgical changes, but the people could not understand all these metamorphoses overnight. Esipov wrote:

> Who could explain this to the people? The lower clergy? But most of them were in a very pitiful condition in respect of enlightenment and morality. Those representatives of the lower clergy who were better in these respects, built their authority exclusively upon the strict execution of rituals, adherence to the Orthodox old times, and knowledge of the old church books. And now they were

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[1] P. Miliukov *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul'tury*, t. 2 (Parizh: Sovremennyia Zapiski, 1931): 29. Hereafter the translation is mine, if not otherwise indicated.

[2] P. Miliukov *Ocherki*, p. 39.

> ordered to relinquish this authority, to teach people against their own convictions, to injure their own highly profitable prestige.[3]

It was only natural that the first schism-teachers were clergymen. Archpriest Avvakum was the brightest and most characteristic figure among them, and any account of the schism would be incomplete without a word about this remarkable man. He was called "a man of genius"[4] and "one of the most purely and unexpectedly original writers that ever wrote."[5]

When young Avvakum served as a priest in Nizhegorodskaia province, he was already a law unto himself. Once, *skomorokhi*[6] with dancing bears and musical instruments came to his village. Avvakum, always ready to fight against the faithless, alone started a fight with them, broke their tambourines, took away two big bears, beat one of them and "let the other go to the fields."[7] He also tells in his autobiography how he burned his own fingers over a candle in order to suppress sinful thoughts. His writings are full of visions; miracles and conversations with angels were part and parcel of his everyday life.

Avvakum's parish belonged to the patriarch's eparchy, so he had to visit Moscow once in a while. Patriarch Joseph knew him well; he also made friends with the tsar's confessor, Stepan Vonifat'ev, as well as with some other representatives of the highest circles of the circular clergy. Avvakum was famous for his erudition, wide reading, and original, energetic preaching with the use of popular language. Soon, he joined the "circle of zealots of piety" that formed around the tsar Alexis and consisted mostly of provincial archpriests: Avvakum, Daniil, Lazar', Loggin, and Ivan Neronov who came to Moscow from Nizhnii Novgorod.

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[3] G. Esipov *Raskol'nich'i dela XVIII stoletiia. Izvlecheniia iz del Preobrazhenskago prikaza i Tainoi rozysknykh del kantseliarii*, t. 2 (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdanie D. E. Kozhanchikova, 1863): 209

[4] A. M. Panchenko "Boiarynia Morozova – simvol i lichnost," *Povest' o Boiaryne Morozovoi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979): 4.

[5] D. S. Mirsky "Preface," *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924): 26.

[6] *Skomorokhi* – wandering actors in medieval Russia.

[7] *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma im samim napisannoe i drugie ego sochineniia* (Moskva: GIKhL, 1960): 62.

Members of the circle wanted to bring live sermons into the church services, to eradicate pagan vestiges, and to improve church life in general. When Ivan Neronov preached at the Kazan Cathedral, there was not enough room for all comers. People often cried; Neronov himself could hardly speak sometimes because of sobbing. The zealots of piety were trying to develop Russian Orthodoxy in the native vein and to bring it closer to the people. As preachers, who were not afraid to condemn the authorities, Avvakum and Neronov were extremely popular among the simple people. They joined the group of correctors (*spravshchiki*), who were amending church books under patriarch Joseph. These people considered it superfluous, even harmful, to collate Russian books with Greek originals; they gave much more weight to Russian traditional rites and ancient manuscripts.

At first, Nikon, the future patriarch,[8] was also close to the circle. It was Vonifat'ev, the tsar's confessor and member of the circle, who recommended Nikon for the patriarchate. When Joseph died, and Nikon became patriarch (1652), he was eager to continue the books amendment. First of all, he dismissed all previous correctors and appointed new ones, the learned people, who knew Greek and other foreign languages. So, relations with his former friends were broken; the fight started. Avvakum and his friends were driven not only by personal motives; they defended native tradition against alien cultural borrowings.

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[8] Unfortunately, Nikon, his image and biography are beyond the scope of this work. In some features, his figure is very similar to the one of his archenemy, Avvakum. Russian historian N. F. Kapterev wrote two exhaustive studies about Nikon: *Patriarkh Nikon i ego protivniki v dele ispravleniia tserkovnykh obriadov* (Moskva, 1887) and *Patriarkh Nikon i Tsar' Aleksei Mikhailovich.* 2 vols. (Sergiev Posad, 1909, 1912).

The tsar supported Nikon; Alexis even initiated the reform, according to some accounts. Several considerations influenced this decision. The reformed Russian church could be yet another means for centralization of the Russian state and for the unification of the Russian church with the church of Ukraine, which followed the Greek rituals. As to the foreign-policy program, Alexis planned to expand Russian influence into Slavic lands that were under Turkish rule at that time. In order to carry out this sacred mission he needed the support of the other Eastern Orthodox churches, but the authority of the Russian church was not particularly high among them. A lot of differences in rituals and books accumulated over the years, so the tsar deemed it necessary to bring Russian church books and rituals in compliance with the *contemporary Greek rituals and books*. All this could explain why the reform continued even when Nikon was gone.[9]

What exactly were those changes that were brought in by the reform? Why did they cause the schism? First of all, there were changes in ritual: they were the most evident for the simple people, so attached to the outward forms of worship. The most famous change was the requirement to use three fingers instead of two for making the sign of cross. The two fingers symbolized the double nature of Christ, the three fingers – the Holy Trinity, so the argument was not simply about the number of fingers, but about the meaning of the most habitual rite. Other changes, offensive to Russian Orthodox sensibilities, were: saying three hallelujahs instead of two, using seven consecrated loaves at the offertory instead of five, moving of church processions against the sun instead of moving with the sun. Textual changes included the spelling of the name of Jesus (*Iisus* instead of traditional *Isus*) and a lot of minor amendments ("temple" instead of "church," "scions" instead of "children" and the like).

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[9] M. Cherniavsky disagreed with the opinion that foreign policy played some role; he interpreted the tsar's fight against the Schism as a continuation of his interior policies, i. e. the formation of the secular state. He asserted, "It can be illustrated by the first law of the *Ulozhenie* of 1649, which established a new category of crimes, political crimes. The law itself only gave form to a conception which had arisen in the early seventeenth century, conveyed by a sacramental phrase *slovo i delo gosudarevo* (word and deed concerning the sovereign)." ("Old Believers and the New Religion," *Slavic Review*, vol. XXV, no. 1 (1966): 12.) Building the secular state, Alexis could not stand any opposition. Although I disagree with some of Cherniavsky's conclusions, it seems that this article is still unsurpassed as the most consistent interpretation

Hurting Russian pride, Nikon solved each vexed question in favor of Greek rather than the native Russian way. But since the sixteenth century, many Russians believed that the Greek Church was "Latinized" by its compromise with the Catholics at the Council of Florence in 1439. It is very important to understand that after the Council of Florence and the fall of Constantinople (1453), Russia could not rely on the authority of its Greek teachers anymore. In Russia, the fall of Constantinople was perceived as God's punishment for the union with the Catholics. Since this source was now poisoned, only Russia was to keep the Orthodoxy in all its purity. Almost one hundred years before Nikon's reform, the Council of the Hundred Chapters (*Stoglavyi Sobor*, or simply Stoglav, 1551) anathemized making the sign of cross with three fingers and saying three hallelujahs. The fathers of the Sobor knew that this decision contradicted the contemporary Greek tradition and made it intentionally: Greeks were now "apostates." Since Greeks themselves taught Russians boundless hatred towards everything Latin, now Russia was left to guard the Orthodoxy in a frightful loneliness. Where would it seek help or advice? Where else, if not in its own sacred past? It seemed the only ideal that could be fully trusted, and Russians peered anxiously into the past.

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of the schism. I chose not to dwell on it because recent interpretations are the matter of secondary importance for this work.

The zealots of piety were driven by this ideal, whereas Nikon was full of respect for the Greek tradition. He was known to say: "Although I am a Russian and a son of a Russian, my faith and my convictions are Greek."[10] Avvakum appealed to tsar Alexis Mikhailovich with a completely different stance:

> But you are a Russian, Mikhailovich, not a Greek. Speak your natural language; do not humiliate it in the church, at home, or in the proverbs. We are to speak as Christ taught us to speak. God loves us no less than Greeks. He gave us literacy in our own language through Cyril the Saint and his brother.[11]

We can clearly see from this passage that, in Avvakum's view, the Russian sacred past of miracles and Saints had ultimately only one teacher, only one connection, Christ himself. It is from this ultimate bond that leaders of the schism derived their strength and confidence. Avvakum boldly accompanied his admonitions to the tsar with the following note: "I am saying this because I love you. Somebody else would not tell you this; they all lick you, -- and your soul has already been licked out."[12] Despite Avvakum's strong connections at the court, he was exiled to Siberia. He and his family spent about ten years in exile (1653-1663).

In 1658, feeling the coolness of his former "special friend" tsar Alexis, ambitious and proud Nikon laid down his cloth and left Moscow. Now his enemies were hopeful. Avvakum returned from Siberia in 1664,[13] as defiant as ever, and started to preach in Moscow again. He found a lot of supporters in the court and among the simple Muscovites. Particularly well-known among his followers were three women: boyarynia

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[10] Quoted in: N. F. Kapterev *Kharakter otnoshenii Rossii k pravoslavnomu vostoku v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh* (Sergiev Posad: Izdanie knizhnogo magazina M. S. Elova, 1914): 444.

[11] *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*, p. 159.

[12] Ibid.

[13] It took Avvakum about two years to travel from Siberia to Moscow.

Feodosiia Morozova, her sister, princess Evdokiia Urusova, and colonel's wife, Mariia Danilova. Being wealthy and noble, these women, especially Morozova, were able to propagandize the Old Belief in all strata of society, including the royal family. Besides Avvakum, Morozova was the second symbolic figure that was associated in popular memory with the Old Belief.[14]

At the age of seventeen, a Moscow beauty Feodosiia Sokovnina married a middle-aged prosperous boyar Gleb Morozov. Her family was not as noble as Morozov's, but the Sokovnins were related to Miloslavskys, the tsaritsa's family. Fedosiia was close to the tsaritsa, and the latter always pleaded for her before the tsar. Boris Morozov, Gleb's older brother, was the educator of the young tsar Alexis, "as a father" to him. It was Boris Morozov who arranged a marriage between seventeen-year-old Alexis and Mariia Miloslavskaia. Ten days later, he, himself a middle-aged widower, married Maria's sister, Anna. It was not surprising then that his brother Gleb later also married the tsaritsa's relative, Feodosiia Sokovnina. In 1662, both brothers Morozov, Boris and Gleb, died; Boris – without an heir. Feodosiia's son, Ivan, inherited an enormous fortune, one of the biggest, if not the biggest in Russia. She was a thirty-year-old widow who needed to manage all this affluence until her son came of age. At first, she wanted to take the veil, but stayed in the world for the sake of her son.

Once Morozova became a widow, she turned her own house into a refuge for paupers, "God's fools" (*yurodivye*), and those Old Believer monks who were driven out of their monasteries. Famous Moscow *yurodivye*, like Feodor, Kiprian, and Afanasii, were eating from the same vessel as the boyarynia. Avvakum lived in her house when he arrived in Moscow from Siberia in 1664. Morozova was entering asylums and jails giving out alms. Beautiful, stately, and strong, she was extremely popular in Moscow. After the tsaritsa's death, her connections at the court did not save her from the punishment that befell all unrepentant leaders of the Old Believers. Morozova, Urusova, and Danilova were imprisoned underground and were starved to death.

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[14] Both, Morozova and Avvakum, became symbols of the Old Belief in popular memory, but Morozova exceeded her mentor in popularity and became imprinted in the Russian mind after 1881, the year of creation of

After being tolerant for a while, and trying to bring Avvakum to his side with gifts, requests, and threats, the tsar realized that reconciliation was impossible. The Sobor of 1667 excommunicated Avvakum[15] and proclaimed anathema on the Old Believers. The harsh sentence clearly demonstrates that persecutors, as well as persecuted, did not distinguish between dogma and ritual. Thereafter this anathema was in the center of many debates. According to one church historian, by this anathema fathers of the Sobor "put in the dock all Russian Moscow church history."[16] Indeed, the Council of the Hundred Chapters, the landmark of the Russian church history, was repudiated, and "a Russian man... was to curse those rituals that he was taught to hold sacred one hundred years ago."[17] It was too much of a change for many people. Whereas previously they saw the guardianship of the ancient Orthodox piety as a *mission* of the Russian church, now they witnessed how the Russian church joined the heretics. The only thing that the true believers could do at the moment was to hide and to keep the *Old* Russian church intact.

The anathema of 1667 had turned a church discord into a schism. Prior to this year Russian religious worshipping was in disarray: every church held services in its own way, some priests used the new books, some the old ones. "One and the same priest could

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the famous picture by V. I. Surikov, which we will discuss later in the work.

[15] He spent next fifteen years in a subterranean cell in Pustozersk, in the region of Nortern Pechora.

[16] A. V. Kartashev *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkvi*, t. II (Parizh: YMCA-PRESS, 1959): 179.

[17] P. Miliukov *Ocherki*, p. 50.

perform some rituals the old way, some – the new way; deacon could contradict a priest; the left choir – the right choir."[18] Seeing this tumult, people often stopped coming to church, and the authorities were anxious to restore order. The anathema of 1667 had left the Old Believers behind the church walls and the situation of the schismatic community immediately aroused a lot of questions and apprehensions. How to bury the dead, to whom to confess, where to receive communion, and how to baptize children were persistent questions, to name but a few.

Avvakum and his friends, other leaders of the schism, the monk Epiphanies, the priest Lazarus, and the deacon Theodore, were exiled to Pustozersk, on the Arctic coast. Although kept in a subterranean dungeon, they were quite free to agitate, to write, and to send their writings all over Russia. From there, Avvakum's invectives thundered, his humour brightened the days of his flock. Answers, explanations, and guidance were in constant supply from Pustozersk. But there was no harmony even among the Pustozersk prisoners. Avvakum argued with the deacon Theodore about the Holy Trinity and wrote epistles against him. When Avvakum was burnt at the stake in 1681, the Old Believers were left leaderless, without any ecclesiastical authority.

With time, when those priests who were ordained before Nikon's reform, started to die, the *Raskolniki* stumbled upon yet another difficult problem: they did not have hierarchs. Who would ordain priests for them? As a result of this crisis, two branches of the movement appeared, the Priestists and the Priestless. The Priestless (Bespopovtsy), who lived mostly in the North, rejected any compromises with the official church, so they were completely on their own. This group begot a multitude of different sects named most often after their spiritual leaders or founders: Danilovshchina, Filipovshchina,

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[18] P. S. Smirnov *Istoriia russkago raskola staroobriadstva* (S.-Peterburg, 1895): 60.

Fedoseevshchina, and the like.[19] The Priestists (Popovtsy) were not that audacious; they decided to accept run-away priests from the "Nikonian" church after some ritual purification. At the same time, there were a lot of legends among the Old Believers about the existence of Orthodox communities with proper hierarchy somewhere in the East. Those legendary communities were supposedly not touched by Nikon's innovations. These beliefs were so strong that even in the nineteenth century influential Old Believer merchants financed an expedition to look for such a community.

A. P. Shchapov compared the *Raskol'niki* with Lot's wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt: in the same way, they were forever doomed to look into the past, to preserve the old order. This comparison is impressive but not accurate. During those years the Old Believers were also peering into the future, waiting for the end of the world. Strong eschatological expectations, especially among the Priestless, were another characteristic feature of the schism. These expectations became particularly acute during the reign of Peter the Great. The logic was very simple: Russia was not true to the Orthodox faith; therefore, the Third Rome had fallen ("the fourth will be no more" was a famous formula), the apocalyptic drama had begun, and Nikon was a precursor of the Antichrist. Peter the Great with his appalling innovative reforms was Antichrist himself. The Old Believers stopped praying for the tsar. Now a political element was blended with the religious one: they did not consider the tsar to be a legitimate ruler.

A series of rebellions with strong religious component started before Peter's reign. The first and the most famous one, in the Solovetsky monastery, began with passive resistance: the monks simply put the new books aside and used only the old ones. The monastery was situated on an island in the White Sea and, by its influence on the neighboring territories, could be considered the religious capital of the Russian North. During the years of uncertainty, monks wrote several petitions to the tsar asking to leave the old order untouched. The fifth petition, the most famous one, written in 1667, gave a detailed account of the rebels' convictions. Imbued with eschatological spirit, this petition warns about the widespread deviations from the true Christianity, condemns Greeks and their books, and foretells the very near and imminent Apocalypse. The monks vowed that they would rather die than accept the new books.

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[19] The Vyg community was the center of the Priestless branch of the Old Belief. The Vetka and Starodub settlements on the Polish border and communities of Nizhegorodskaia and Saratovskaia provinces belonged mostly to the Priestists. Several valuable studies of local schismatic communities were written by the end of the nineteenth century. See for example: V. G. Druzhinin *Raskol na Donu v kontse XVII veka* (1889), M. I. Lileev *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e XVII—XVIII vv.* (1895), N. Sokolov *Raskol v Saratovskom krae* (1888).

In response, the government ordered a siege of the monastery, which continued until 1676. The tsar did not allow the besiegers to shoot, while the monks had a lot of necessary supplies (including the military ones) in the monastery. The years of siege advanced the proliferation of the schism. People revered the ancient monastery. Many pilgrims were coming there every summer, but they could not enter the monastery because of the siege. They returned home and spread along the way stories about the monks, the staunch defenders of the old faith. It so happened that the tsar Alexis died several days after the seizure of the monastery. His death was interpreted as a punishment; a lot of stories appeared about his unfulfilled dying wish to stop the besiegers.

Moscow officials believed that some connections existed between the great rebellion of Stepan Razin (1670-71) and the schism. For example, Stepan had visited the monastery as a pilgrim. The presence of the schismatic ideologues was strongly felt during the *Strel'tsy* (musketeers) uprising of 1682. One of the leaders of the schism, Nikita Dobrynin wrote a petition for the rebellious *strel'tsy* imitating the famous fifth petition of the Solovetsky monastery. Sophia[20] managed to alienate *strel'tsy* from the Old Believers with threats and concessions. The former priest from Suzdal', Nikita Dobrynin (called Pustosviat in the verdict) was beheaded in Red Square.

Now the government was aware that schismatic ideology was ready and available for any popular discontent. Some late-nineteenth century research confirmed that the apprehensions were justifiable. For example, after studying the history of the Schism on the Don River, V. G. Druzhinin emphasized strictly religious disposition and lack of any political intentions or schemes on the part of the *Raskol'niki* who came to the Don. He wrote: "Those political schemes were immediately developed by Cossacks as soon as schismatic teachings touched them, they were developed by people who were alien to sincere attachment to the old faith as well as to any religious conviction."[21] Indeed, the schismatic slogans were used in every uprising of the eighteenth century. Hence, the laws of 1684 and 1685 that prohibited the Old Belief, for which the ultimate punishment was death. The *Raskol'niki* were hounded and persecuted. How could they escape this persecution? They could either flee and settle in some inaccessible regions, or else carry out self-immolation. The latter choice was certainly linked with the eschatological expectations, which became especially acute after the stringent *ukase* of 1685. In 1687, more than thousand people burnt themselves in Berezov, Olonetsky region. The same year, 2700 people killed themselves in Paleostrovsky monastery.

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[20] Sophia was tsar Alexis' daughter from his first marriage and Peter's half-sister. Supported by the streltsy uprising of 1682, she became regent, while her two brothers, Ivan and Peter were proclaimed tsars.

[21] V. G. Druzhinin *Raskol na Donu v kontse XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tip. I. N. Skorokhodova, 1889): VIII.

Peter's accession to the throne seemed to bring some easing of the *Raskol'niki*'s lot: the *ukase* of 1702 proclaimed religious tolerance. In 1716, the *Raskol'niki* were allowed to reside openly in cities and villages under the condition of paying the double poll tax (Peter needed money for his endeavours). As the years passed, Peter toughened his policy concerning the *Raskolniki*. Those paying the double poll tax were restricted in their civil rights, had to wear special clothes, and perform some special services. They were not allowed to hold any public office or to testify against the Orthodox in the court.

The strong ~~stand taken by Peter on~~ the question of beards and dress seemed to be of secondary importance, but not for the Old Believers. Mel'nikov emphasized: "Russian people were exceptionally unyielding when Peter's reform touched the home hearth, private everyday life, and centuries-old traditions."[22] In the seventeenth century, Russians had thousands of hand-written copies of the decisions of the Council of the Hundred Chapters, where shaving was equated with a deadly sin. An epistle of patriarch Adrian was also popular where it was written: "Look often at the icon of the frightful doomsday and you will see how the righteous, standing to the right of Christ, all have beards, and to the left of him stand infidels and heretics, Lutherans, Poles and others, similar to them, beard-shavers."[23]

Patriarch Adrian also condemned German clothes. Several ukases about shaving beards and wearing German costumes (of 1705, 1707, 1713, 1714) demonstrate how hard it was for Russians to accept the innovations. Some people testified that the order to shave beards prompted them to join the Old Believers.

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[22] P. I. Mel'nikov "Pis'ma o Raskole," *Sobranie sochinenii v 6-ti tomakh*, t. 6 (Moskva: "Pravda", 1863): 203.

[23] Esipov *Raskol'nich'i dela*, p. 164.

The schismatic communities developed and blossomed in the late eighteenth century, and this success was for them the best confirmation of their righteousness. As a result, alienation grew between them and the rest of Russia, even though more tolerant rulers came to take the place of the tough ones. The reigns of Anna and Elizabeth were not simple for the Old Believers. Auspicious changes started with the accession to the throne of Peter III and then continued under Catherine II. She invited those *Raskol'niki* who resided abroad to return to Russia. The special tax, which was imposed under Peter the Great, was abolished in 1769. Now the *Raskol'niki* were allowed to live in Moscow and St. Petersburg. During the plague of 1771 they asked for permission to establish a hospital and an almshouse. They gave a lot of help to the Muscovites during the plague ordeal and acquired many new supporters. Two permanent schismatic centers were now present in Moscow: Preobrazhenskoe and Rogozhskoe cemeteries, each one with a chapel, a hospital, and an almshouse. However, the tolerant policies of Catherine II, of Paul I, and Alexander I could not bring back together the two parts of the Russian society; the rift was complete.

In addition, the world of Russian popular religious dissent was so diverse and multicolored that both officials and clergymen were often perplexed by the variety of sects. We have already discussed the Christ's faith, or *Khlystovshchina*, in the introduction. It emerged even earlier than the Old Belief, in the middle of the seventeenth century. Its origin is connected with the name of Father Kapiton. Starting from 1630s, he preached strict asceticism, which was supposed to lead to mystical unity with God. Those who acquired this unity did not need any mediators, such as clergymen, to intercede in their connection with God.

Let us review the legend of the *Khlystovshchina*'s origin; it will help us to comprehend the difference between the Old Belief and this sect.[24] One of Kapiton's disciples, Danila Filippovich, formulated twelve basic commandments of the *Khristovshchina*. The last one was: "Believe in the Holy Spirit." During the intense debates on whether the new books or the old ones would help to save souls, Danila Filippovich, who advocated belief in the Holy Spirit alone, threw all church books, old and new, into the Volga. After some memorable event, he ceased to be a man and became a "living God." He later turned Ivan Timofeevich Suslov into another "living God," Christ. In order to do this, he thrice, in the presence of witnesses, ascended to heaven together with him. After that, Ivan Timofeevich traveled and spread the teaching of his Father, his twelve commandments. His activity became widely known and he was arrested on the order of the tsar Alexis. According to the legend, he was executed three times, and all three times he was resurrected. After that, he supposedly lived peacefully in Moscow for thirty years spreading his Father's teaching.

The narration goes on and on. There was Ivan Timofeevich and his Ascension, then a new Christ, a former *strelets*, Prokofii Danilovich Lupkin, who continued the tradition of God's People. Many events described in the legend correspond with accounts of the written sources. But the images of this tradition are godly ones; the leaders of the sect were seen as real embodiments of Christ. So the Gods of the *Khristovshchina* are devoid of any human flaws. They are very different from the teachers of the Schism, Avvakum and the like, who do make mistakes, swear, and scold each other. The Old Believers were never so mystical and ecstatic about their praying as God's People. Old

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[24] P. I. Mel'nikov was the first one to discover the legend about Danila Filippovich. I also used several of his articles, especially "Belye Golubi" (White Doves) in this sketch of the *Khlysty* and the *Skoptsy*

Believers revered the Russian past, noted Mel'nikov, while the legends of God's People had no connection with Russian history. Mel'nikov considered this as a very important division proving the non-Russian origin of the *Khlysty*, since "tradition is always inseparable from any belief of the Russian man."[25] In Mel'nikov's expression, they lived mostly by hope, while Old Believers lived by memories.

During the initial period of their history, the sectarians were already very different from the Old Believers, as they were not waiting for the end of the world, and they lived differently. A contemporary specialist in sectarianism wrote:

> In contrast to those Old Believers who fled to the borderlands, and there during the first period turned to slash-and-burn farming or beaver hunting, and to a man cursed urban life, trade, and money, the *Khristovovery* [*Khlysty*—E. K.] were among those peasants who streamed from the villages to the cities, taking part in trade and having no doubt of the power of money.[26]

Cursing the sinful world surrounding them, God's People outwardly followed its ways while secretly preaching severe asceticism and total separation from the world. When all the projected dates for the end of the world had passed, the Old Belief started to change. Of course, the Christ's faith was changing too: during the late eighteen century two new movements sprang from it: the so-called "Spiritual Christianity" (*Molokane* and *Dukhobory*) and the *Skoptsy* (Emasculates) sect.

It was the Skoptsy who brought the preaching of the God's People to a queer but understandable logical deduction. The first Emasculates appeared among God's People in

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teachings.

[25] P. I. Melnikov "Pis'ma o raskole," *Sobranie Sochinenii v 6-ti tomakh*, t. 6 (Moskva: "Pravda," 1963): 243.

the eighteenth century. From the rejection of sexual relations preached by the *Khlysty*, as well as from some biblical texts, they derived the necessity of emasculation. The emasculation was often called "whitening", and Emasculates' self-appellation was "white doves." The legends of the Emasculates are even more mystifying than the ones developed by the *Khlysty*. The founder of their sect was a member of the *Khlyst* sect, a peasant from the Orel province, Kondraty Selivanov. Initially, he visited many *Khlyst* "ships" (communities) and scolded them for not living up to their ideals. The *Khlysty* hated him and even made attempts on his life. Since his preaching was unsuccessful, Selivanov chose another means, the radical one, castration. Some of the *Khlysty* denounced him to the authorities; he was caught, tortured, and exiled to Siberia.

It was when Selivanov returned from Siberia that his legend appeared in all its colorful details. Now he became the emperor Peter III, an alleged child of the empress Elisabeth. According to the legend, Elizaveta Petrovna reigned only for two years, then she left the throne to her favorite lady-in-waiting and lived in the Orel province under the name of Akulina Ivanovna. Her son, Peter, was sent for education to Germany where he was "whitened" (*ubelen*). His wife, Catherine, hated him for undergoing this operation. She instigated a conspiracy against him, but he learned of this plot in time, exchanged clothes with one of the guards and fled. The soldier, who was also a "white dove" was mistaken for the tsar Peter and killed. Catherine discovered the mistake, but announced her husband's death anyway. Peter went to the Orel province, to his mother, Akulina Ivanovna and there took the name Kondraty Selivanov, then traveled and preached all over Russia before being arrested and sent to Siberia.

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[26] A. I. Klibanov *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia (1860s – 1917)*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982): 51.

When Catherine died, the emperor Paul wanted to meet his father and sent to look for him in Siberia. The fact that Paul sent for Selivanov was confirmed by several testimonies. Their encounter was described in a song.[27] When Paul proposed to return the scepter and the crown if Selivanov was his real father, "the Redeemer"[28] rejoined by demanding Paul's emasculation. Paul was furious, did not want to listen and left. Now the "Father-Redeemer" pinned his hopes on the grandson, Alexander. In reality, Selivanov was sent to a psychiatric hospital after the meeting with Paul (the song does not convey this circumstance). The lives of many exiled Emasculates improved during the reign of Paul, since the emperor considered them insane, not dangerous. Later, Selivanov met Alexander I too. Alexander sent him to an almshouse in St Petersburg, with a pension. The Petersburg *Skoptsy* took him from there after a short time and he lived in the houses of well-to-do members of the sect, mostly merchants. Now that the Redeemer was free and times were more liberal, many Emasculates came to live in Moscow and St Petersburg. They were involved in trade and in changing of money. Some of them became quite affluent.

The structure of the Emasculates' sect and its rituals were very similar to that of the *Khlysty*. Some studies even consider them as one sect.[29] The *Khlysty* and the *Skoptsy* followed the same rites, sang the same songs, had the same beliefs and expectations, and often held their meetings (*radeniia)* together. A congregation was called a "ship", and its spiritual leader – a "helmsman" (*kormchii*). The Emasculates also outwardly followed all the rituals of the Orthodox Church while secretly holding their *radeniia* (also called

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[27] I. A. Arseniev *Sekta skoptsov v Rossii* (Berlin, 1874): 19-21.

[28] In Emasculates' sources Selivanov was usually called *Iskupitel'* (Savior, Redeemer). The act of emasculation was called *iskuplenie* (redemption). There is a pun here. In Russian, these two words, *iskuplenie* (redemption) and *oskoplenie* (emasculation), sound very similar.

"sacred circles," "*sobors*," or "conversations," -- meetings almost identical to the ones held by *Khlysty*). There, they chanted the Jesus prayer, singing, and dancing (mostly spinning); some of them prophesied under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Women could join the sect. Some members of the sect were not emasculated; they were called "Spiritual Emasculates." Mel'nikov also considered the *Khlysty* and the *Skoptsy* as the same sect, the only difference being "the physical mutilation of the body," for which the *Skoptsy* were called "sufferers" or "great sufferers."

N. I. Nadezhdin pointed out some similarities with the Old Belief: the *Skoptsy* were making the sign of the cross with two fingers, they wrote Christ's name the way Old Believers did (*Isus*), used the schismatic cross and so on. *Raskol'niki*, especially the Priestless ones, often joined the sect of the Emasculates. At the same time, they did not have any predilection to the old books or old icons. The Emasculates were never a numerous sect, but their mysterious and sinister image was often at the center of debates. The government did not know much about these sects. But some ominous features of this one were so obvious that, for the officials, it signified unnatural inclinations in popular religiosity.

Self-mutilation was not the only frightening feature for the authorities. Selivanov called himself Peter III and thereby, probably, was a reminder of the horrors of Pugachev's uprising. Pretenders and peasant uprisings plagued Russia throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The government was apprehensive, that is why many of the studies on this sect were written by government officials. The Minister of Internal Affairs commissioned Nadezhdin's *Investigation on the Heresy of the Emasculates* (1845). Reutsky wrote his *The God's People and the Emasculates* (1872) on

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[29] N. V. Reutsky *Liudi Bozh'i i skoptsy* (Moskva: Tip. Gracheva, 1872): 4.

the order of count K. I. Palen, the Minister of Justice: the number of cases about "seducing" the Orthodox into this sect was constantly growing.

Practically, both works express the official point of view on the sect of the Emasculates, with a time-difference of about thirty years. Despite the difference in tone, the government position hardly changed during those years. For Nadezhdin, the double-Pretendership of Selivanov (as Christ and Peter III) was especially menacing, turning heretics into political criminals. Calling the Emasculates "enemies of the humanity," he concludes that admonition and exhortation will not help in this case: "this evil might be eradicated but cannot be cured."[30] Reutskii defines the sect of Emasculates as "heresy joint with the civil crime of mutilation and with a well known anti-state and anti-social direction."[31] So, political apprehension is sound in both reports. In contrast, a contemporary scholar approaches this sect as "an example of collective and personal self-assertion organized around the figure of Jesus Christ," and Selivanov's life in particular as "the search for a culturally recognizable sense of self."[32] Did this mean that the government overestimated the political dangers of the sectarian world?

In the opinion of N. V Shelgunov, a revolutionary democrat, "the question of the schism, like all other questions of Russian life, had its beginning in the 60s... In the primarily political mood of that time the schism was also explained politically."[33] A glance into Nadezhdin's report, not to mention many other documents, shows that the Russian government interpreted the Schism politically long before the sixties. Yes, "the question of the schism" was born in the sixties, which means that it became a part of public discourse during this time. But it was not historians and publicists who invented the new political interpretation of the schism, Nicholas I and government officials of the 1840s should bear the palm. It was through the efforts of this administration that the *Raskol'niki* and their societies were muffled up in the atmosphere of unmitigated secrecy and surveillance.

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[30] N. I. Nadezhdin "Izsledovanie o skopcheskoi eresi," in V. I. Kel'siev, ed. *Sbornik pravitel'stvennykh svedenii o raskol'nikakh.* Vyp. 3 (London: Trubner & Co., 1861): 240.
[31] Reutsky *Bozh'i Liudi*, p. 3.

The state and the Schismatic communities kept their distance from each other for a long time. The situation started to change slowly at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, some public manifestations of the schism at its chapels, including the one at the Rogozhskoe cemetery in Moscow caused a sensation and bewilderment in government circles. It appeared that the Ministry of Internal Affairs "did not have the slightest idea about the cemetery."[34] The same was true of the other sects: in 1824, Alexander I "wished to know" how women castrate themselves. The Ministry could not answer this question.[35] Only after 1826 did Ministry start to get regular reports from the provinces on the number of *Raskol'niki*. The historian of the Ministry admitted that this authoritative organ had neither systematized data on the *Raskol'niki* nor any plan of dealing with them. Each important case was reported to the tsar personally. The circular of August 19, 1820 from the Ministry to the governors stated the most general rule of policy toward the *Raskol'niki*:

> The *Raskolniki* are not persecuted for the opinions of their sects, concerning their faith; they can calmly hold to these opinions and observe their rites, although

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[32] L. Engelstein "Rebels of the Soul: Peasant Self-Fashioning in a Religious Key," *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 23, nos. 1-4 (1996): 197, 199.
[33] N. V. Shelgunov *Sochineniia*, vol. 2 (n. d.): 674.
[34] N. Varadinov *Istoriia Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*. T. 8 (St. Peterburg, 1863): 103.
[35] Ibid., p. 134-5.

without any public demonstration of their teaching or divine services. Under all circumstances, they should keep strictly to the rules established by the law.[36]

The government divided all sects into three groups: especially harmful, harmful, and less harmful. Only in 1835 were the names of the "especially harmful" sects disclosed (Spirit-wrestlers (*Dukhobory*), Icon-wrestlers (*Ikonobortsy*), Milk-eaters (*Molokane*), Judaisers (*Zhidovstvuiushchie*), Emasculates (*Skoptsy*))[37] with a note that local authorities should present proper materials if they wanted to classify some local sect as especially harmful, thereby admitting the lack of information at the center.

In the late 1830s, in the same vein of giving more initiative to provincial authorities and further regulating church and state policies, the Consultative Provincial Committees on the Schism were founded. They were supposed to study sects in the region and act in accordance with local circumstances. The first such committee, in St. Petersburg, was created in 1825, under Alexander I. Six years later, Nicholas I formed the same kind of committee in Moscow. These first two committees must have been successful since in 1838 Nicholas issued a decree commanding the gradual establishment of secret committees in all provinces where there were a lot of *Raskol'niki*. The secrecy of these committees was emphasized several times in this decree. An eparchial bishop and a governor were to meet personally for secret consultations and to form the committee "in order to promote the unity of orders from provincial and eparchial authorities in the cases concerning *Raskol'niki*, sectarians, and other apostates from the

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[36] Varadinov *Istoriia*, p. 123.

[37] Their common feature was non-praying for the tsar. Varadinov, p. 338. Mel'nikov noted that lack of data on the schism is the basis of classification and pointed at some inaccuracies. For example, there was no such sect as Icon-wrestlers. They were simply Spirit-wrestlers (*Dukhobory*) who rejected icons. They first appeared in the eighteenth century in Kharkov and Ekaterinoslav provinces. This sect did not have a consistent teaching until the end of the nineteenth century. I chose not to provide sketches of histories of these other sects, like Spirit-

Orthodoxy, as well as to strengthen the strictness and coordination of measures against their delusions."[38] In 1838 these committees were created in Petrozavodsk, Tambov, and Perm', in 1839 – in Tver' and Saratov. Another twelve committees were formed during the 1840s, and the process continued in the 1850s.

By and large, the government was constantly toughening its policies concerning the schism during the reign of Nicholas I. There was a conspicuous contradiction in the government resolutions concerning the *Raskol'niki*, which probably prevented the government from elaborating a consistent policy on this matter. On the one hand, several resolutions emphasized that the tsar recommended adhering to "the constant rule: to avoid any cases, which might lead the *Raskolniki* to think about themselves as a community of separate religion."[39] Even the decision about reinforcement of the police in the places of *Raskol'niki*'s settlements stipulated, "it will serve to persuade the *Raskol'niki* that they do not constitute any special estate." [40] On the other hand, all decisions concerning the matters of the schism were made separately and secretly. For example, on the very same day when the tsar signed the resolution about police reinforcement (June 10, 1853), he also signed another one, ordering the gradual abolition of "monasteries, cemeteries, and other illegal schismatic communities...without any exceptions."[41]

Prior to that, in 1852, several statistical expeditions received a secret assignment: to determine the real number of *Raskol'niki* in certain provinces. According to the

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Wrestlers and Milk-eaters, because they did not play such a major role in the works of fiction as the Old Believers and the *Khlysty*.

[38] *Sobranie postanovlenii po chasti raskola. Postanovleniia Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, t. 1, (London: Trubner, 1863): 217-218.

[39] Ibid., t. 1, p. 347, 348

[40] Ibid., p. 405.

[41] Ibid., p. 406.

memorandum of the councilor of State (*statskii sovetnik*), I. Sinitsyn, the task proved to be difficult. Neither peasants, nor priests were cooperative. Priests and policemen often depended on the *Raskolniki*'s bribes; therefore, they were not interested in denouncing them.[42] So, Sinitsyn compiled the list of "indications of the schism." After cataloguing some material objects (a special kind of rosary, crosses, small pillows for ground-bows, and censers) he cited "upon the entering of an official, continuous repetition of the Jesus prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us,*" and " reading of the prayers with a special nasal voice [*gnuslivym golosom*]."[43] After reading this list, one can say that the officials did not miss the tiniest detail, such as nasal voice, in their persistent shadowing of the schism. Further, Sinitsyn gives precise and short characteristics of all schismatic denominations and sects that existed in the Iaroslavl' province, giving special attention to the sect of Wanderers or Runners (*Stranniki* or *Beguny*).[44]

The following year, the Minister of Internal Affairs sent the same Sinitsyn back to the provinces, now with the direct order "to ascertain the exact data on the contemporary situation of the schism in Iaroslavl' and Kostroma provinces."[45] This time, Sinitsyn was not only to inquire about the numbers, but also about the education and "moral condition" of the *Raskol'niki*, about their spirit, hopes, and weak points. In conclusion, the Minister warned again about the Emperor's order to act in the greatest secrecy. In a new memorandum, Sinitsyn informed that official data greatly underestimated the number of the *Raskol'niki*. To give the exact numbers was next to impossible: how to calculate the number of the "covert" *Raskol'niki* and reckon the whole mass of "the hesitant"? Calling eschatological expectations "the dogma of coming of the last time", or "delirium of the schism," Sinitsyn assured that "not only the hesitant, but even the most zealous Orthodox believe in this dogma," that "about three fourths of the province make the sign of cross with two fingers."[46]

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[42] Some of the *Raskol'niki* were *zapisnye*, i. e. written as such in the church registering books, others were *tainye* (covert ones). The latter had to pay to the priests regularly for entering of their names into the books, as being present for the confession and the communion. The deal was apparently beneficial for both sides: the underpaid priests received constant remunerations; the *Raskol'niki* escaped persecution. As a result, the statistics of the schism was always flawed.

[43] "Zapiska s. s. Iv. Sinitsyna," in Kel'siev, ed, *Sbornik*, vyp. 4, p. 4.

[44] The sect of Wanderers was especially popular in Iaroslavl' and Kostroma provinces. The image of the Antichrist was at the center of their teaching. Since the Antichrist ruled in Russia, one had to *run* from any city and village repudiating one's property, relatives, and motherland. Another important feature of their doctrine, frightening for the authorities, was slogan of equality and brotherhood.

[45] "Predpisanie m. v. d. Bibikova, s. s. Sinitsynu," in Kel'siev, ed. *Sbornik*, vyp. 4, p. 55.

Ivan Sinitsyn was but one of the officials who were secretly investigating religious dissent in the early 1850s. Since 1853, the government started to close some 'illegal' monasteries and almshouses and turn them over to the Orthodox Church or to official charitable organizations.[47] One of those who carried out closures of those 'illegal' monasteries was an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, later—famous writer, P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pechersky). The term 'illegal' meant that those monasteries and almshouses were built without the government's permission. Under Nicholas I, the atmosphere of utter secrecy surrounded all government measures concerning the schism. N. I. Nadezhdin most accurately expressed the essence of the official view on the schism:

> From the origin of our schisms, dating from the second half of the seventeenth century, fanatics, seized by the schism, falling away from the filial obedience to the church, also started to fall away from the faithful duties to the fatherland. Such is a Russian man by nature, and so was he brought up by history, that civil and

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[46] I. Sinitsyn "O raskole v Iaroslavskoi gubernii," in Kel'siev, *Sbornik*, vyp. 4, p. 152.
[47] *Sobranie postanovlenii*, t. 1, v. 2, pp. 414-416, 419-420, 422.

> religious elements are merged in him so inseparably that the slightest betrayal of the Orthodoxy inevitably entails betrayal of Orthodox Russia.[48]

N. I. Nadezhdin (1804-56), a literary critic, a precursor of Belinsky, and the son of a village priest, is well known in Russian history as the editor of the journal *Teleskop*, which published Chaadaev's first "Philosophical letter." The bitter and grim letter denounced Russian culture while praising European values and European history. The government took the matter seriously: Chaadaev was declared insane and placed under house arrest; Nadezhdin was exiled, his journals were closed. Living in exile in Vologda, Nadezhdin had to change his occupation and became interested in ethnography. For the rest of his life he worked as an active researcher for the Department of Ethnography of the Russian Geographical Society.

Nadezhdin was not the only one who changed his colors. Another man of glorious youth, who later in his life attained that same prosecuting vigor so characteristic of the reign of Nicholas I, was Ivan Petrovich Liprandi. Son of a Spanish nobleman and a Russian baroness, Liprandi started his career in the Russian army without any money or patronage to help him. The young officer could rely only on his own wit and bravery. Having participated in several campaigns, he started the war of 1812 at the rank of lieutenant and two years later marched into Paris at the rank of lieutenant colonel. Valiant, knowledgeable, and highly educated, he was also famous in the army for his numerous romantic duels. One of them ruined his military career. In 1820, he was sent to serve in Kishinev, a hopeless fringe of the Russian empire.

But it was this assignment that happened to provide him with an honorable place in Russian cultural history. A month later, Alexander Pushkin, exiled from St. Petersburg, arrived in Kishinev. A close friend of the greatest Russian poet, Liprandi left a detailed memoir of their friendship, while Pushkin imprinted Liprandi in popular memory in the image of Silvio, in his celebrated novella *A Shot* (Vystrel). Pushkin's romantic personage, Silvio, dies in 1821, fighting for Greek independence. Almost at this very time Liprandi reveals himself as an extremely talented official and becomes an indispensable specialist for the authorities of the Southern region. He "quickly learns all languages of the Ottoman empire, receives and dispatches his own agents, knowing everything from them, strikes up acquaintances with noble and influential people in the Sultan's lands, bribes Turkish officials,.. and unceasingly buys Oriental books and manuscripts."[49]

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[48] N. I. Nadezhdin "O zagranichnykh raskol'nikakh," in Kel'siev *Sbornik*, vyp. 1, p. 77.

I. P. Liprandi lived a long life and faithfully served the regime of Nicholas I, at first – in the south, in Kishinev, and after 1840 – in the capital, serving as an official in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He was scolded and cursed in Russian historiography for his detestable role in the reprisal of the circle of Butashevich-Petrashevsky. Using the help of an agent provocateur, Liprandi revealed the existence of the secret society. The report presented by Liprandi qualified this circle as a dangerous revolutionary organization. Consequently, its leaders (including young F. M. Dostoevsky) were sentenced to death, brought to the place of execution, then pardoned and exiled to Siberia. Many contemporaries argued that it was only Liprandi's official zeal that turned the circle for self-education into a revolutionary group.

But Petrashevsky's case was only one among about 700 large commissions that Liprandi carried out during eleven years of his work at the Ministry. He was an expert in the schism among other matters; he looked through approximately 10,000 files from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and became one of the best specialists not only on Old Belief, but also on other sects and their differences. One of Liprandi's recommendations was to prohibit forever any debates with sectarians. In his opinion, "to enter into discussion with the ignorant was incompatible with the dignity of the Orthodox church." "To let someone argue means to treat him as an equal;" therefore, discussions with the *Raskol'niki* would "only strengthen their conceit."[50]

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[49] N. Ia. Eidel'man "Gde i chto Liprandi?" *Iz potaennoi istorii Rossii XVIII – XIX vekov* (Moskva: Vysshaia shkola, 1993): 441.

The figures of Nadezhdin and Liprandi merit attention, because they seem symbolic in a sense: both were not average intellectual hack-workers, yet they wholeheartedly embraced the grave official stigma of the schism. Having in mind Nadezhdin's background: his liberal views and strict adherence to the ideals of the enlightenment and Liprandi's romantic youth and involvement in the Decembrist movement, one has to wonder why they were so eager to crush the schism. The opinions of such people as Nadezhdin and Liprandi could serve as an indicator of how omnipresent and uncontested the official stereotypes of the schism had become. Maybe, one should seek an explanation in the atmosphere of the 1840s – early 1850s and once again emphasize the profound change in the attitude toward the schism that took place when Alexander II came to power. It is obvious that during the reign of Nicholas I, the alienation of the two parts of the Russian people was completed and sealed by the utter secrecy of government policies.

One should also mention another reason for toughening of the government policies towards the Old Belief in the late 1840s: it was an attempt at establishing of the "true" church hierarchy by the Old Believers. The history of this attempt is not well known, so a short sketch of it seems necessary. It all started in 1827, when Old Believer priests were prohibited to move from one region to another. It was a harsh blow: since Old Believers never had enough clergy, their priests always needed to travel.[51] Another instruction prepared in the same year stipulated that Old Believer priests living in the Rogozhskoe cemetery in Moscow should be "left in peace," but the new ones "by no means should be accepted." The government decision is understandable: constant influx of run-away priests from the official church to the Old Belief was annoying for the authorities and insulting for the church. On the other hand, Old Believers were left to wait until all their priests will die out, and this decision left them no choice but to seek to establish their own hierarchy for ordination of priests.[52]

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[50] Liprandi, p.96.

First, it was decided to verify old legends about the existence of Christian communities with the true ancient hierarchy in far-away countries not touched by Nikon's innovations. In 1836, under the highest secrecy, Petersburg merchant Gromov commissions two monks, Pavel and Geronty to start the search. The two monks were aspiring to devote their lives to the establishment of the hierarchy. Their first attempt failed: they were arrested as vagrants near the Black Sea, in Kutaisi and brought back to Russia. But since both vowed to make the establishment of the hierarchy the cause of their lives, they were not discouraged by this first failure.

Next year, they moved to Belaya Krinitsa, a small Old Believer settlement with a monastery, which was situated not far from Chernovtsy, in the Austrian empire. Many pages of the *History of the Belaya Krinitsa's Hierarchy* read as an adventure story. After four years of persistent and dangerous work, which was mostly done by Pavel[53] and Geronty, the two Russian monks who illegally crossed the border, Austrian authorities gave the permission to create the episcopate in a formerly God-forsaken monastery. The monastery existed without the formal permission of the Austrian government and was usually inhabited by fewer than 10 monks. Local authorities were fighting against the establishment of the episcopate, but higher officials in Vienna supported the cause since "it could create trouble in Russia."

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[51] There were about 200 Old Believer priests in Russia in the beginning of the nineteenth century and several millions of Old Believers who were in need of their services. N. I. Subbotin *Istoriia Belokrinitskoi ierarkhii* (Moskva, 1974): 47.

[52] By one account, it was nobody else but the omnipotent count Benkendorf who suggested in a private talk with a Petersburg merchant S. G. Gromov that Old Believers should have their own higher clergy to ordain priests in order not to insult the Orthodox Church. (Ibid., pp. 64-6).

Having obtained the permission, the enthusiasts needed to find a bishop. The leaders of the Moscow Old Believer community were eager to acquire the hierarchy; they promised full financial support to the whole undertaking.[54] After a lot of travel, adventures, and intrigue Pavel and his new companion, Alimpy secured a bishop from the Greek church. Their travels in Serbia, in Syria, and in Egypt convinced them that the existence of some unspoiled hierarchy somewhere in the East was only a dream. Their choice fell upon Amvrosy,[55] a Greek by origin, a former archbishop of Bosnia, who was withdrawn from his eparchy because he supported his poor flock against the oppression of the Turkish officials. He lived in dire poverty in Constantinople when Pavel and Alimpy were introduced to him. Polish emigrants, who held high positions in the Ottoman Empire, helped them to find the bishop and organized their departure from Constantinople.

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[53] See Plate I.

[54] When Geronty came to Moscow in 1844, the leaders of the Rogozhskoe cemetery promised to pay 24,000 roubles a year to support the episcopate when it is installed. They also covered all the expenses needed for the search of a bishop and the establishment of the episcopate. In order to give Belaya Krinitsa a proper look, the Rakhmanov family allocated 200,000 roubles to build a large church there. (Subbotin *Istoriia..*, p.298).

[55] See Plate II.

Finally, it seemed, the dream came true, and 'the community of ancient piety' acquired a bishop, who could establish the true hierarchy and bring peace to the community. But instead, this new hierarchy brought a lot of doubts and quarrels into the community. The new bishop did not understand a word of the language of his new flock, he was coming from the Greek church; therefore, according to *Raskol'niki*'s beliefs, he was a heretic and had to be "amended" first. How to make this amendment was a big problem. From now on, Russian Old Believer community was divided into those who accepted the new hierarchy and those who refused to do so.

Russian officialdom saw all this as underhand plotting of Russian enemies. The participation of Polish emigration was especially telling in this sense. According to the official Russian historiographer of the schism, thanks to the Polish involvement, Old Believers in the Ottoman Empire "acquired such rights and privileges that none of the other Christian populations under the Ottoman rule had."[56] It was done with the aim to strengthen the loyalty of the Old Believers to the Ottoman Empire in view of the upcoming war.

The response of the Russian government was prompt. First, it arrested Geronty, the archimandrite of the monastery in Belaya Krinitsa during his clandestine visit to Moscow in 1847. Then, it intensified the surveillance over the connections between Russian and foreign *Raskol'niki*. In addition, Russian government required explanations from the Austrian authorities about their help in establishing the hierarchy. The Russian note emphasized that these actions were incompatible with Austrian-Russian friendship.

As a result of Russian intrusion, the Austrian government ordered to close the monastery in Belaya Krinitsa. Amvrosy was exiled, but he had already ordained several bishops and priests, so the hierarchy was in place. Thus, Russian countermeasures came too late and even the official historiographer questioned the wisdom of the government's actions, which "only irritated the Old Believers setting them against the Russian government."[57] Meanwhile, the monastery in Belaya Krinitsa was only reckoned as closed, services were held there and priests were ordained. The situation worsened during the Crimean War, in 1854, when Russian troops stationed on the Ottoman territory among quite friendly toward them Old Believer villages. Suddenly, they arrested Old Believer archbishop Arkady and bishop Alimpy.[58] Both were sent to the Spaso-Evfim'ev monastery in Suzdal', which was in fact a jail of the Holy Synod. The archimandrite of that monastery had to report monthly on his attempts to convert the prisoners. Now they were referred to in the official correspondence as Prisoner # 1 and Prisoner # 2.[59]

The *Raskol'niki* seemed to be forever cast out and branded as enemies of the state. Meantime, first Slavophiles and Westernizers and later Populists were looking for some magic formula expressing the essence of the Russian people, for the *raison d'etre* of its existence. But some ethnographers and folklorists started to realize that the Russian people was only "a ghost created by disturbed imagination of the official nobility."[60] F. I. Buslaev, a folklorist and renowned literary scholar, argued that the Russian people could not be described as one entity. Buslaev found the true popular images only in regional peculiarities, assessing the unifying efforts of the center as forcible anti-national policies. Where exactly should one look for the true Russian people was, consequently, the

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[56] N. I. Subbotin *Raskol kak orudie vrazhdebnykh Rossii partii* (Moskva, 1867): 32.

[57] Ibid., p. 20.

[58] This happened unexpectedly, according to the accounts that are friendly to Old Believers; inimical observers said that the arrests were well-deserved: the hierarchs gave their blessing to detachments of Ottoman Old Believers who departed to fight against Russia.

[59] A. S. Prugavin *Staroobriadcheskie arkhierei v Suzdal'skoi kreposti* (S-Petersburg, 1903): 12.

question that he asked: "in the double-faith of the Nikon's followers or in arrogant fanaticism of schisms and sects?"[61] Buslaev's rhetoric is very important: he does not place "the Nikon's followers" (read: the flock of the official Orthodox church) above the *Raskol'niki*, he lists it as one of the groups, and he does not juxtapose Orthodoxy and the 'evil' schism; on the contrary, he highlights the diversity of the schismatic groups.

Buslaev deemed the most noteworthy historical songs and spiritual poems (*dukhovnye stikhi*), "the most popular means for supporting and strengthening national forces."[62] The sixties were the time of awakening for Russian ethnography and folklore studies. Several monumental collections were published.[63] Agreeing with Buslaev's assessment of the significance of historical songs and spiritual poems, I consider it necessary to determine whether any traces of the historic schism can be detected in these materials.

Having studied five notable collections published in the sixties, I found only one song, that speaks directly about the schism – "Song about the Siege of the Solovetsky Monastery." In this song, the tsar sends his *voevoda* (military commander) to the Solovetsky Monastery and orders him:

> You, my favorite commander,
> Go to the blue sea,
> To that large island,

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[60] F. I Buslaev *Narodnaia poeziia. Istoricheskie ocherki* (St. Peterburg, 1887): 436. The article was first published in 1861.

[61] Ibid.

[62] F. I. Buslaev "Russkie narodnyia pesni, sobrannye P. I. Iakushkinym. Predislovie, " *Letopisi russkoi literatury i drevnosti, izdavaemye Nikolaem Tikhonravovym*, t. I, otd. II (Moskva, 1859): 89.

[63] *Pesni, sobrannye P. N. Rybnikovym* (Moskva, 1861); *Pesni, sobrannye P. V. Kireevskim*, vyp. 1-10 (Moskva, 1860-74); *Sbornik russkikh dukhovnykh stikhov, sostavlennyi V. Varentsovym* (St. Peterburg, 1860); *Kaliki perekhozhie. Sbornik stikhov i issledovanie P. Bezsonova*, vyp. 1-6 (Moskva, 1861-4). Although quality of Bezsonov's editorial principles, as well as his luck of moral integrity was often criticized, his edition was the fullest collection of spiritual verses.

To the honest Solovetsky monastery;
And pull down the old faith, the right one,
And set there the new faith, the wrong one.[64]

Voevoda disagrees. For him, "it is impossible even to think" about pulling down the old faith, the right one. The tsar indignantly insists, and voevoda "sins:" he leads troops to the sacred monastery. The finale of the song has different variants. Some end with the first cannon fire, others (known mostly from manuscript collections) narrate the devastation of the monastery and desecration of its sanctities.[65] The availability of several variants, incidentally, is indicative of the song's popularity.

Having only one song, even a popular one, can we assert that people did keep the memory of the schism? What if this song is only a reflection of their reverence for the monastery and of astonishment at its violation? In addition, the existence of the song was localized: it was widely spread in North European Russia and in the regions along the Volga river (i. e., in the provinces with the highest number of the *Raskol'niki*) and hardly known in other districts. Does it mean that memory of the schism was alive only in those places where the *Raskol'niki* were physically present? Buslaev thought that it was only Old Believers who kept this song. It would confirm the thesis of complete alienation of the Russian people from the *Raskol'niki*. But was it a complete rupture?

The theme of alienation between the two parts of the Russian people comes to mind again when we examine other popular historical songs. Several of them are connected with the Strel'tsy uprising of 1698. As was noted earlier, Old Believer elements and Old Believers' demands were very strong in that uprising, but the songs do not mention these elements at all. The central event of the songs is a conflict between the tsar and the Strel'tsy. They ask for forgiveness, but he does not accept their apology and says: "I will execute some, others I will hang, / and from you, ataman,[66] I will cut off head."[67] But why did this entire squabble happen? The reason for the conflict remains unclear. All the songs sympathize with the Strel'tsy in their tragic fate, but do not mention their cause. Was the Russian population at large indifferent to the Old Believers' fight?

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[64] Sochineniia P. I. Iakushkina, p. 536.

Some songs of the eighteenth century persistently call Peter the Great "the Orthodox tsar." Every repetition can serve as indirect evidence of the estrangement or of the conscious rupture, since these songs speak about the Anti-Christ of the *Raskol'niki*'s folklore. There are several songs about Ignat Nekrasov, an ataman of Old Believer-Cossacks from the Don. [68] During the uprising led by Kondraty Bulavin, Nekrasov led his detachment across the Turkish border in order to avoid surrendering. Some songs weep over his nostalgia, others blame him for treason, but his convictions are never mentioned. At least, one is reminded about this episode from the history of the schism by these songs.

Other sects, such as the Khlysts, are devoid of even such mediated allusion. There is not a trace of their existence in popular memory. It is quite justifiable: first, the Khlysts were very secretive, second, they did not live in the past, as the Old Believers did. They were striving for higher, mystical experiences; therefore, their life took place on some

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[65] The Old Believers preserved the songs about the tragedy of the Solovetsky monastery in full: it was they who most often kept manuscript collections of historical and spiritual songs.

[66] A Cossack chieftain was called ataman; here it means 'commander.'

[67] *Sobranie narodnykh pesen P. V. Kireevskogo* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1977): 99. A contemporary edition of historical songs contains fifteen songs about this uprising. See: *Istoricheskie pesni XVIII veka* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1971): 36-46.

[68] *Istoricheskie pesni XVIII veka*, pp. 86-103.

other plane. Mel'nikov explained that simple people never considered Spirit-wrestlers, Milk-eaters, God's People, and Emasculates as schismatic sects:

> These *dark* (using the popular expression) sects... live strictly by themselves; not only the Orthodox, but even the Raskolniki shun the adherents of these sects, have some kind of aversion for them, even some superstitious fear, very similar to the fear of the devil or of a witch, consider them some mysterious sorcerers, spit and make the sign of cross when they are mentioned.[69]

If we cannot find direct references to the Old Belief in the folklore, should we continue to seek allusions? What was the most characteristic feature of the Old Believers' worldview? Many scholars name their apocalyptic spirit, their constant thinking about the end of the world. If we look for this particular feature, Russian people seem not to be divided: one can find plenty of eschatological motives in the Russian folklore. The time when "all stars will fall down as leafs from a tree," and "all deeds will be read, all sins will be known"[70] was always in the thoughts of the Russian people. In this sense, there was still some common ground. Not to mention, the Old Believers lived side by side with the Orthodox Russians in many places.

These seemingly trivial remarks are important: when Old Believers became the sensation of the day in the 1860s, some publicists treated them as complete outcasts and forgotten hermits. The intelligentsia enjoyed finding out more and more details about the historic rupture. Educated people imagined that thereby they were building a bridge between the two sides. But what were those two sides? Were they connecting the Orthodox majority with the schismatic minority, or the educated people with the "true spirit" of Russia, with its sacred past, or leaders of a future revolution with revolutionary masses? The first case would signify a historic junction of two mighty streams of popular religiosity; the second case would mean merely a process of self-education undertaken by the intelligentsia. The objective of the next chapter is to determine what really took place during the 1860s.

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[69] P. I. Mel'nikov "Pis'ma o raskole," 243.
[70] *Sochineniia P. I. Iakushkina*, p. 496.

CHAPTER TWO: THE AROUSAL OF INTEREST IN OLD BELIEF IN THE 1860S

The tragedy of the Crimean War, the accession to power of Alexander II, and the abolition of serfdom excited and disturbed Russian society. In a matter of several years the society went through dramatic social changes. One popular writer characterized those years as the time of "social spiritual disorder."[1] In the countryside, the traditional order of things had to be discarded. The nobility could not own "the christened property" anymore. This led to a gradual ruin of many old noble families. One of the most popular novels of the time, *Oskudenie* (Impoverishment) told the story of such ruin.

As to the former "christened property" itself, the difficulties of post-reform management prompted many peasants to leave their villages. They were lost and lonely in the world of towns and cities. But those peasants who stayed in the villages were also uncertain about the new order and lonely. According to one of the most astute observers of the post-reform life, G. I. Uspensky, the unity of a post-reform peasant commune was fictitious. One of the sketches in his cycle "From the Village Diary" was called "Spiritual Loneliness of a Peasant." Previously, reasoned Uspensky, peasants were united by common suffering; they were accustomed to hard toil and fear. Now each family suffered and toiled on its own, there was no moral connection inside or moral support from the commune.

Uspensky created a whole gallery of portraits of peasants and residents of small provincial towns during this period of social changes and uncertainty. There was a group of new authors that appeared in the early1860s, during the "awakening of rose-coloured hopes." Until that time there were no professional writers in Russia. One could not support oneself by honoraria. During the sixties, many young aspiring journalists and writers moved to Moscow and St-Petersburg from the provinces. They wanted to sever any connections with the ignominious past and start anew. Poor but hopeful, they did not encounter any help or guidance from the older generation of writers. In his later years, Uspensky remembered this period as a grim one:

> When I appeared in Petersburg in 1861, there were two salient phenomena—the beginning of the youth movement and drunkenness... of the people of the forties, people of old education... One could not help encountering shameful scenes everywhere. For two years I was only bringing drunkards in *delirium tremens* to hospitals... There were no good guiding personalities.[2]

The most famous writer of the sixties was undoubtedly I. S. Turgenev. His celebrated novels studied the succession of typical figures of Russian intelligentsia: Rudin, Insarov, Bazarov. Turgenev was trying to comprehend social changes, but was not able to find "anything strong and firm."[3] As a result, a hero of his controversial novel *Dym* (Smoke), published in 1867, proclaimed that everything Russian was just smoke and called for joining European civilization. The question about the meaning of Russian destiny, about the Russian past and future was at the center of all discussions. For a considerable period of time, from the 1860s to the 1880s, the image of Old Believers was very popular in Russian literature and in the periodical press; it became important for Russian self-identification. How did "the men of the sixties" approach the problem of the schism?

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[1] G. I. Uspensky "Volei-nevolei," *Sochineniia v 2-kh tomakh*, t. 2 (S.-Peterburg, 1897): 465.

[2] "Pis'ma Gleba Ivanovicha Uspenskogo," *Arkhiv V. A. Gol'tseva*, t. 1 (Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelei, 1914): 62-3.

[3] Quoted in: I. S. Turgenev *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, t. 7 (Moskva: Nauka, 1981): 527.

2.1 The Inexhaustible Afanasy Shchapov and the Mystery of the Old Belief

> Shchapov shot above the Academy like some fleeting meteor that shined and illuminated objects with some fantastic and, maybe, false light...
>
> P. Znamensky

The first work to cause a sensation and precipitate a change in the public perception of the Old Belief was actually a recast Master's thesis written by a student of a Theological Academy, Afanasy Shchapov. The son of a poor village sexton and a native woman from the Irkutsk region in South-eastern Siberia, and the best graduate of the Irkutsk Theological Seminary, in 1846, he was enrolled in the Kazan'' Theological Academy. Possessing a legendary capacity for work, he spent an average of 17 hours a day at his writing desk, his boots forming depressions in the floor. Fellow students used to come to his room to see this miracle. He chose 'Russian schism of the Old Belief' as a subject of his Master's dissertation, which was defended in 1856. Written within the precincts of the theological academy by a liberally minded young student, the work was certainly controversial. Trying to meet the requirements of church history, it also contained elements of psychological and sociological explanation for the origin of the Old Belief along with an abundance of historical materials.

Traditionally, theological works concentrated on the dogmatic differences with the Old Belief, but in the 1850s the situation changed: several works devoted to the history of the schism appeared.[4] The change was far from being significant, though, since the aim of these works was still the same: to discredit the Old Belief. One adjective most frequently stood next to the words Old Belief in these works. This adjective makes clear the whole mechanism of identifying the Schism only as ignorance (Makary) or spiritual malaise (Muraviev). In his dissertation, Shchapov uses this adjective quite often: '*mnimyi*' (imaginary, seeming, ostensible). Another popular adjective that he also uses is 'false' (*lozhnyi*). The logic is simple: the Schismatics adhere to the wrong, "false" Old Beliefs, and therefore, they are "imaginary", "so called" Old Believers. The Church faithfully keeps Old Rituals, real and true ones, while Old Believers only imagine themselves as keepers of the ancient Orthodox rite, but in fact adhering to several occasional slips of some unknown ancient scribes. Clearly, under this interpretation, Old Belief is a mere spiritual mistake, an unfortunate misunderstanding, which needs to be condemned, not studied.

Although retaining some conventional phrases and rhetorical motifs, Shchapov's work overcame the tenet of traditional approach to the schism. Instead of cataloguing Old Believers' mistakes, it demonstrated the deep roots of Old Belief in Russian traditional mentality and insisted on the democratic character of Old Belief. Several months after the appearance of the Shchapov's book, Herzen, the famous Russian émigré and editor of *Kolokol* (The Bell, free Russian newspaper, published in London), gave a huge package with manuscripts and documents concerning the *Raskol'niki* to another émigré, V. I. Kel'siev. According to Kel'siev, at that moment Herzen had had these papers for a considerable time, and it was only the sensation created by the Shchapov's book that prompted him to consider the publication of these sources.[5]

In a later article, "Zemstvo i raskol" (Zemstvo and the Schism) Shchapov himself

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[4] Makary (metropolitan), *Istoriia russkogo raskola izvestnogo pod imenem staroobriadchestva* (SPb, 1855); A. N. Muraviev *Raskol, oblichaemyi svoeiu istorieiu* (SPb, 1854).
[5] V. I. Kel'siev "Ispoved'," in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, t. 41-42 (Moskva: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1941): 284-5. [Kraus Reprint Ltd, Vaduz, 1963].

completely rejected the traditional, strictly religious interpretation of the Raskol in favor of a sociological one, defining it as a regional opposition to the social order, to the growing political pressure of the central powers. The aforementioned words "mnimyi" and "lozhnyi", which so often provided the basis for explanation and condemnation of the Old Belief, were conspicuously absent from this article. Instead, the historian speaks about "the enchanted mystery of the raskol." This study will address the problem of the difference between Shchapov's dissertation and his later articles by discussing his personal development as well as the criticism and the praise he received for his dissertation that might have influenced him, and changes in the social and spiritual situation in Russia. Our task is to explain why rational interpretation turned into an "enchanted mystery" and to show that genuine historical interest proved to be incompatible with a quest for identity.

According to Shchapov's fellow student and friend N. Ia. Aristov, all students of the Kazan' Academy went through a period of passion for Russian history. When in 1854, at the beginning of the Crimean war, the English blockaded Solovetsky Island, as part of the series of naval demonstrations along the Russian coasts, the collection of manuscripts of the famous Solovetsky Monastery was sent to Saint Petersburg and later transported to the Kazan' Academy. The Kazan' students were full of interest and enthusiasm upon reception of such an invaluable collection, which was never inventoried by a historian, and they always praised the English, mockingly calling them "our benefactors."[6] When Shchapov moved to St-Petersburg several years later, he took with him a sack full of notes taken from the Solovetsky manuscripts. In Aristov's opinion, sons of priests knew popular culture much better than university students:

> Of all the educated Russian youths of our time, no one had such close and vital knowledge of our people, their everyday life, their needs and their troubles, as the children of the rural clergy, who grew up among the peasants. The educational district of the Kazan' Theological Academy stretched out over all of Siberia, Transcaucasian territory, and a third of European Russia; that is why students, gathered from various regions, had the opportunity to become acquainted, without the use of books, but through mutual conversations, with different aspects of the commoners' life, or, without noticing it, became fairly good ethnographers. Moreover, Shchapov was very fond of reading books on everyday Russian life, which he found in the academic library.[7]

Sincere, impetuous, and naive, Shchapov was known in the Academy for his frankness and fervor in arguments. One of the professors joked that some other talented student would pause before writing, never being sure of the importance of his ideas, but "Afanasy Prokof'evich, even if placed in the French Academy, would not give the floor to anyone."[8] Aristov thought that this impetuousness and neglect of outward appearance could explain the lack of polish in Shchapov's works. He always handed his term papers unfinished, because he was usually carried away and wrote too much. During vacations, bored students loved to instigate someone to argue with Shchapov. To say a few pejorative words about Russian peasants was the easiest way to engage him. Shchapov vehemently defended the Russian *muzhik*, never noticing that the whole argument was staged. These lengthy battles usually ended up when the exhausted combatants spit into

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[6] N. Ia. Aristov *Afanasii Prokof'evich Shchapov* (SPb: Tip. A. S. Suvorina, 1883): 12.

[7] Aristov, p. 10.

[8] N. Ia. Aristov, *Shchapov*, p. 11.

each other's eyes to the huge delight of the listeners.[9] So, the sorrows of the poor as well as the idea of the mightiness of the Russian people were close to Shchapov's heart and became an important part of his scholarly work.

Shchapov's dissertation appeared as a book in 1858 under a rather lengthy title: *Russian schism of the Old Belief considered in its connection with the internal situation in the Russian church and state in the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century*. On the very first page, Shchapov advanced an ingenious approach to the *raskol*, characterizing it as "a stony fragment of ancient Russia."

> *Old Belief, old rituals, old books* of the schism are the characteristic symbol, the expression of mental life of the large part of our people; it is a measure, a cherished, spellbound circle of its thinking; this is, so to speak, an apotheosis, a consecration of that motionless, for ever inevitable *old times*, which had such an important meaning in everyday life of ancient Russia, in customs, manners, and ideas of the people, who used to speak about *old times* in its proverbs: "old is sacred; the older, the fairer; an old custom will never change; threadbare is better."[10]

This excerpt sounds as if it is written by a contemporary student of cultural history, but it is not the only approach that Shchapov proposes in his introduction. To show how strikingly controversial was this work, suffice it to say that in the very next phrase the author refers to the "spiritual-civil democratism of the *Raskol* under the guise of mystical-apocalyptical symbolism," and in the next page he states that this whole topic belongs mostly to the church life and the history of the clergy. Notably, two pages of Shchapov's introduction contain three different interpretations: the schism as a phenomenon of church history versus the schism as an expression of popular mentality (a step away from strictly dogmatic interpretation), and the third one, the schism as a democratic social movement was implied in the reference to its "spiritual-civil democratism." The inexperience and zeal of the young historian can only partially account for this tangle of approaches. Let us start by analyzing each chapter of the book under discussion and see how Shchapov uses these interpretations in his narrative.

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[9] Ibid., p. 14-15.

[10] A. P. Shchapov "Russkii raskol staroobriadstva, razsmatrivaemyi v sviazi s vnutrennim sostoianiem russkoi tserkvi i grazhdanstvennosti v XVII veke i v pervoi polovine XVIII," in *Sochineniia A. P. Shchapova v 3 tomakh*, t. 1 (SPb: Izd. M. V. Pirozhkova, 1906): 173.

The author of the Shchapov's recent biography, A. S. Madzharov, argues that it is only the first chapter of the book that represents the approach developed in the Master's dissertation, that introduction and other four chapters were written (or re-written) during the two years after the defense, which took place in 1856. "It is certain," Madzharov states, "that in 1858 the historian had advanced conceptually in comparison with his 1856 theoretical position."[11] How does the first chapter differ from the rest of the book? It begins with the ingenious cultural analysis conveying the atmosphere of the early stages of the schism, tracing its "two sources: religious and civil." The author shows that Russian religiosity from the very beginning had mostly ritualistic character, as opposed to the dogmatic, spiritually contemplative character of the Byzantine religiosity. Let us follow his thoughts about Medieval Russian Christians:

> They would never come to the priests, their teachers in faith, with dogmatic questions, they asked: what should we eat or drink in this particular day of the fast, what kind of bows should we make? Godly Russian people deeply loved all church sacred objects, especially sacred icons. They revered them so much that

strived to fill their houses with icons. Sacred books had acquired as much importance in the cause of salvation as the divine word or Christ's faith itself.[12]

Relating many examples of churchmen and laymen, even princes copying the church books, Shchapov concludes that the care about spreading of church books and building and decorating of new churches were the most important concerns of Russian medieval Christians, who devotedly kept the spirit of the true faith. Shchapov sees "the first germ" of the Old Belief in the "dark, ostensible piety" of the sixteenth century, in the development of a one-sided, deadly ritualistic trend, in the predominance of appearances and rites over the lively Christian thought.[13] It was the time, the historian proclaims, when two trends were present in Russian religiosity: "lively, true churchly-ritualistic and deadly-ritualistic, schismatic."[14]

In the first two chapters one cannot find a consistent chronological history of the schism. Instead, the author presents several intricate cultural studies. The first chapter is mostly concerned with religious and cultural preconditions of the schism, and then makes a contribution into long-established dispute. For almost two centuries, the Old Believers were blaming patriarch Nikon's austerity and intolerance for the rise of the schism, but Shchapov praises Nikon and suggests that it was rather the "religious democratism" of

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[11] A. S. Madzharov *Afanasy Shchapov* (Irkutsk, 1992): 46.

[12] Shchapov, "Russkii raskol staroobriadstva..." p. 179-80.

[13] Ibid., p. 200.

[14] Ibid., p. 186. G. P. Fedotov also thought that seeds of the schism were sown at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Fedotov's premise was quite different: he was tracing the development of Russian sainthood. Following the symbolic line from St. Theodosius to Sergius of Radonezh and then to Nil Sorsky and Joseph of Volotsk, he was trying to "discern concrete personal and national features under the nimbus." (G. P. Fedotov "Tragediia drevnerusskoi sviatosti," p. 303) Two saintly figures, says Fedotov, personify the crisis of Russian religiosity in the sixteenth century: Joseph Volotsky and Nil Sorsky. Joseph's supporters found their strength in strictly regulated piety, they believed in the alliance of the church with the state, while Northern monks, Nil's adherents, professed love, meekness, spiritual freedom, and poverty. The victory of St. Joseph's party led Russian spirituality directly to the Old Belief, to the "leakage of holiness" (utechka sviatosti), in Fedotov's terms. It was for a good reason that Joseph of Volotsk had become the

the minor clergy that prompted disagreements. He shows how the schism becomes a more and more complicated, many-sided opposition, how religious dissent turns into a national-democratic-civil protest against all kinds of westernizing changes.

In the second chapter, the author concentrates his attention on "the moral deficiencies of the Russian society of the seventeenth century, which were favorable for the origin, development, and dissemination of the schism."[15] The basis of this chapter is a rigid dichotomy between the lack of enlightenment in Russian society and the "light-bearing" (*svetonosnyi*) activity of Nikon. The tone becomes more affirmative. The logic of this "struggle between light and darkness" is simple: roughness of Russian morals was caused by the lack of enlightenment; therefore, those involved in the schism were moral outcasts, who did not want to comply with the improved moral order. [16] Mostly rhetorical, this chapter inconspicuously but tightly connects all the laments of Russian chroniclers about people's mental darkness and religious apathy with the origin of the schism, thereby once again associating adherence to the olden times with coarseness, ignorance, credulity, superstition, neglect of the church and other "moral deficiencies."[17]

If moral deficiencies of Russian society of the seventeenth century comprised the basic elements of the schism, how could this movement become so strong and numerous? Shchapov attributes the rapid spread of the schism to the strength, determination, and large number of its leaders. Accordingly, the next chapter presents a biographical-

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main saint of the Old Belief, "with Avvakum , the school of St. Joseph left the Russian church." ("Tragediia," p. 319).

[15] Shchapov, "Russkii raskol staroobriadstva..." p. 239.

[16] Ibid., p. 241.

[17] Some ten years later. N. I. Kostomarov, considering the same topic of popular religious indifference, links it with the lamentable state of the church affairs, coming to the conclusion that the *Raskol'niki* were the most talented and energetic people. While fighting for the grandfathers' rites, they started to learn and think. According to Kostomarov, it was the ignorant and the indifferent who stayed with the church. (N. I.

geographical sketch of this dissemination. Seemingly oblivious to any discrepancy with his own previous assertions about Old Believers' ignorance and moral degradation, the author states that with time, wealth and prosperity of individual Old Believers and their communities had become an important factor in drawing people into the *Raskol*. He attributes all economic successes to the slyness and pushing of the leaders of the schism.

So far, after considering chapters two and three, we did not discern the "methodological advancement," which was suggested by Madzharov. Our indicators, the words 'ostensible' and 'false' (*mnimyi* and *lozhnyi*), still accompanied any mention of the Old Belief. These words are less noticeable in the fourth chapter, which is totally devoted to the unsettled state of the Russian church, to its disorders that were conducive to the success of the schism, such as the boyars' opposition to Nikon, lack of supervision over the religious affairs (some parishes and even eparchies "widowed" for years), the small number of parishioners and vast spaces of the eparchies. Shchapov thoroughly scrutinizes every small detail of the organization of the church affairs in the seventeenth – early eighteenth centuries. He calculates the average size of an eparchy and a parish in square versts (1.06 km), showing that some parishes stretched for a hundred kilometers and more, making it impossible for the parishioners to attend services. He discusses the moral qualities and household troubles of the priests, complains of the unsatisfactory condition of religious education, and considers the flaws of popular spiritual manuscripts. All this is accompanied by the usual derogatory remarks about the schism.

The tone changes completely in the fifth chapter "The civil state of Russia at the time of the appearance and dissemination of the schism." Whereas in chapter four the

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Kostomarov "Istoriia raskola u raskol'nikov," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, kn. 5 (SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1905): 211-261). This article was first published in 1870.

author refers to the schism as "an opposition of *false* olden times against new and better organization of the Russian church" (p. 337) or "a worm that secretly gnawed the Orthodox flock of the Russian church" (p. 350), here the schism is called "purely popular democratic opposition" (p. 433) and "a refuge for all who were displeased with the serfdom" (p. 440-1). There is a complete change of style and paradigm. Suddenly, all religious phraseology is cast aside. The central theme of the mighty state encroaching upon people's freedoms dominates the narration. It seems as though the previous pages are written by a different author, by Shchapov the hermit, who spends long hours near his desk. This last chapter makes us recall Shchapov the debater, always ready to speak about the people's needs and sorrows and even to cry about them. It is obviously written in one gust and not even finished. This chapter could not have been a part of the original dissertation; therefore, it must have been written after graduation. It signifies an important change, not only in Shchapov's style, but also in his approach to history and even in his whole life.

What happened to Afanasy Prokof'evich and his work after he graduated from the Academy? The several days after graduation were difficult. He ranked fourth in the class, and felt that his work was underestimated. When the rector of the Academy made some unfavorable remark about his dissertation, Shchapov hurled the work to his feet and said: "If it does not deserve the Master's degree, burn it, I will survive, because I know without any comments the merits of my work."[18] He even considered taking monastic vows, since for a while it seemed the only way to start an academic career. It came as a joyful surprise when he received an offer to stay in the Academy and teach Russian history. During those summer vacations of 1856 when he was preparing his first academic course, Shchapov started "to stir up" his imagination with rum. Nervous and sensitive by nature, dejected by constant humiliations inflicted upon him during the years in the seminary,[19] and now a heavy drinker, Shchapov often sobbed hysterically either about his own bitter fate, or about the fate of his illiterate sisters living in a Siberian village, or about the lot of the downtrodden and unjustly oppressed peasantry.[20] No doubt, he also felt downtrodden and identified himself with peasants. This is why his "regional" (*oblastnaia*) concept of Russian history, formed during those first academic years, bears the ideal of freedom as its central value.

After publication of the book in 1859, Shchapov immediately became a local celebrity. In 1860, he was invited to teach at Kazan'' university. Almost all central journals published reviews of his book.[21] It was widely discussed and ran into two editions. One of the first historians to comment on it was S. M. Soloviev, himself a recent celebrity, who now was publishing a volume a year of his twenty-nine-volume *History of Russia since Most Ancient Times*. Soloviev, a Hegelian, concentrated his attention on the formation of the Russian state, as the most important and inevitable process. The figures of Russian princes and tsars were salient in his history. Shchapov, on the contrary, was interested in the history of the simple people. In spite of this great difference in their approaches, Soloviev praised the book highly. He wrote: "Shchapov, with a remarkable talent, made a successful attempt to explain the origin of the schism and reasons for its

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[18] Aristov, *Shchapov*, p. 31.

[19] In an autobiographical article about the life in a seminary, Shchapov confessed that as a child, he "endured everything: scabs all over the body, hunger because of not having a spoon, nakedness without underwear, only in a lice-ridden threadbare overcoat, thirst for knowledge in the absence of books, wild, brutal beatings of older students, etc." A. P. Shchapov "Iz bursatskogo byta (davno minuvshikh vremen)," *Sobranie sochinenii,* t. 4 (Irkutsk: Vostochno-Sibirskoe Oblastnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1937): 74.

[20] Aristov, *Shchapov*, p. 15, 38-39.

might and longevity."[22]

Shchapov's success soared when he started to lecture at the Kazan'' university. The triumph of his first lecture exceeded all expectations even though many came there with some prejudice against this "seminarist" in the university chair. Subsequently, Shchapov became an idol of university students. When he lectured, all other auditoriums were empty; the city public came to listen to the celebrity. For months, students were going "crazy with delight" (*oshalelye ot vostorga*). Aristov explains this sudden enthusiasm not only by virtues of Shchapov's work, but also by a low level of scholarship at the university, where "students did not read basic works, but were involved mostly in copying secret literature."[23] In comparison with the Academy, the university comes out very unfavorably. Academy students used to come to Shchapov's apartment to criticize and argue with him,[24] while at the university he was surrounded by constant and indisputable admiration.

Aristov's objectivity is questionable: the image of his *alma mater*, Kazan'' Theological Academy, is certainly (and quite naturally) romanticized and polished in his memoirs. Even if he is right, university students had every reason to be delighted: this new professor was young, intellectually courageous and provocative, and most important, he had already formed his own original vision of Russian history. Let us look closer at the Shchapov's introductory lecture and determine what could be so enchanting for the

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[21] *Sovremennik* ridiculed inconsistencies of the book in the article "What is sometimes revealed in liberal phrases?" (1859, no. 9). Historian N. K. Bestuzhev-Riumin immediately rose up to defend and praise Shchapov in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (1859, t. 127, otd. 3, p. 37-42).

[22] S. Soloviev "Uniia, kazachestvo, raskol," *Atenei. Zhurnal kritiki, sovremennoi istorii i literatury*, v. 3-4 (1859): 415.

[23] Aristov, *Shchapov*, p. 58.

[24] Sometimes arguments ended when "Shchapov would tear his shirt and housecoat, scold the students severely, break on them a couple of volumes of *Complete code of laws*, and throw them out of the apartment." Aristov, p. 48.

audience. The lecture is called "General Look at the History of Great Russian People." It starts with the outright rejection of the Soloviev's viewpoint: "I will tell you in advance: not with the thought about statehood, not with the idea of centralization I am entering the university department of Russian history, but with the idea of populism and regionalism."[25] To say "the life of simple people is the essence and content of history" was quite fashionable in 1860, the air of pre-reform years was filled with the words *narod* and *narodnyi*. No doubt, it was an important tune for those students who "copied the secret literature," the more so, as the lecture was finished with a eulogy to the Decembrists and the constitution. Maybe, this part was not original, but to say such things from the university chair, addressing a huge crowd, was certainly a unique and courageous action.

What gave that first lecture an innovative pivot was Shchapov's insistence on "oblastnost." He considered Russian history as history of provincial masses of people, of their gradual territorial and cultural self-organization. Now it was not about Moscow princes and their unifying efforts, but about the local people, their peculiarities and aspirations, and about their fight against centralization. Colonization becomes a significant process in this version of history. If in the book about the schism Shchapov listed vagrancy among the deficiencies of Russian life, now it becomes a part of the romanticized picture of the spirit of colonization and freedom. Later, Shchapov argues, this communal free spirit is suppressed by centralization. The result of this suppression is "the moral serfdom and the servility of the popular spirit."[26]

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[25] A. P. Shchapov "Obshchii vzgliad na istoriiu velikorusskogo naroda. Vstupitel'naia lektsiia, chitannaia A. P. Shchapovym v Kazan'skom universitete 12 noiabria 1860 goda," published in addendum to Madzharov, *Afanasii Shchapov*, p. 237.

[26] Shchapov, "Obshchii vzgliad na istoriiu russkogo naroda," p. 249.

It is easy to understand how refreshing this concept must have sounded, especially if we have in mind that the abolition of serfdom was just several months ahead. Another important merit of this lecture was that it provided a concept, which could give everyone, including Shchapov who was a Siberian and half-Buryat, the sense of meaningful identity. If he never enjoyed freedom in his own life, this concept allowed him and his listeners to identify with the Great Russian people as if with some brotherhood of lost freedom. It was a protest and a consolation at the same time. How could one blame university students for being “crazy with delight?”

The same concept was applied in the brochure *Zemstvo and the Schism* published in St-Petersburg in 1862. In this brochure the schism was interpreted as a mighty communal opposition, which was acting against the state and trying to unify local democratic movements.[27] If we approach the aforementioned “enchanted mystery” of the schism now, we realize that there is nothing mystical about it except for the fact that it easily sweeps away all other interpretations of the schism. Under this interpretation, the fight for freedom and local self-government is the only basis of the schism; therefore, the difference between the Old Belief and other sects is blurred. In Shchapov’s first book, Old Belief’s peculiar position among other sects was carefully carved by its organic connection with the Russian past. If the new approach is used, the difference disappears, and all sectarians are considered as freedom fighters. This consolidates the theory (providing one explanation instead of three or even more) and affirms identity. Although this new assertive identity allows Shchapov to simplify history, it also gives him the strength and stamina; it turns a historian into a pamphleteer and a freedom fighter.

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[27] A. P. Shchapov “Zemstvo i Raskol,” in *Sochineniia A. P. Shchapova v 3-kh tomakh*, t. 1 (S.-Peterburg: Izdanie M. V. Pirozhkova: 1906): 460. [Reprint: Gregg International Publishers Limited, England, 1971]

Probably, this new disposition is to blame for the fact that Shchapov's university career was cut short in 1861, several months after it started. He was drawn into political life by the events that are well known and frequently described in the books on the Russian reforms and revolutionary movement of the 1860s. When peasants received the long-expected "freedom" in 1861, they needed commentators to explain the language of this long and complicated document. Government officials and intelligentsia they did not trust. N. Ogarev characterized the main features of the Statute as "dim semi-glasnost and bright irresponsibility". He asserted that nobody but officials could understand this lengthy document, "written for the robbing, not for the robbed, for the bureaucracy, not for the peasants."[28]

A tragedy happened in the village Bezdna of Kazan'' province in April, when a simple *muzhik, a sectarian,* Anton Petrov, had supposedly discovered a "true freedom" in the notorious document. In the name of the tsar, in their best clothes, people flocked to Bezdna eager to learn about the "true freedom," which, they thought, was given to them by the good Tsar and distorted by local officials. These peaceful meetings alarmed the authorities so much that a military detachment was brought in. Fifty-five unarmed people, calmly waiting for a "tsar's messenger", were killed, and seventy-one wounded. Kazan'' university students decided to organize a church service for the dead. After the service, agitated Shchapov – tears in his eyes – addressed the gathering with the following speech:

Friends, who were inhumanly killed!

At the times of Roman Empire and people's slavery, Christ himself heralded to

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[28] N. Ogarev "Razbor novago krepostnogo prava," *Kolokol. Gazeta A. I. Gertsena i N. P. Ogareva.* Vyp. 4. (1861) Faksimil'noe izdanie (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1962): 846.

> the people expiatory freedom, brotherhood, and equality, and by Pilate's verdict, he engraved his democratic teaching with his own blood. In Russia, one hundred and sixty years ago, our false christs started to appear in village communes by reason of the lack of enlightenment; they proclaimed freedom in their own way out of their servile, suffering standing in the state. From the middle of the eighteenth century, these false christs became to be known as prophets, redeemers of the country folk. Now a new prophet has appeared and also proclaimed freedom in the name of God, and many innocent victims suffered for that. They could not understand the limitations of the State Statute because the enlightenment had not been granted to them.
>
> May you rest in peace, poor sufferers, may your memory live forever! May your souls rest in peace and long live the communal freedom given to your living brothers![29]

The words "false christs" indicate that Shchapov is talking about *Khlystovshchina*. It is in these very "false christs" that he now sees the democratic seeds that sprouted "by reason of the lack of enlightenment." *Khlysty*'s religious communities (called "ships") chose their own christs and virgins. Obviously, Shchapov sees in this an impulse for freedom, even though he realizes that their notion of freedom is crippled by their "servile standing", by the weight of oppression. As we deduced from reading the introductory lecture, freedom became the central notion of Shchapov's concept of Russian history. Therefore, it is clear, why in his later article, "Zemstvo and the Schism," the liberty-loving *Khlysty* overshadowed the Old Believers, for whom identification with the ancient rites was paramount. After analyzing these two documents (the introductory lecture and the speech), we can better comprehend the change in Shchapov's scholarly interests and the logic of the later article "Zemstvo and the Schism."

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[29] Quoted in: G. A. Luchinskii "Afanasy Prokof'evich Shchapov," *Sochineniia A. P. Shchapova*, t. 3, p. XXXVIII.

But let us finish the story of the events of 1861. The Bezdna massacre had become notorious and symbolic of government's inability to deal with peasants, to understand their needs. The word itself, *bezdna* (abyss), seemed to be alluding not only to the abyss of peasants' suffering, but also to the abyss of incomprehension between the peasants and the upper classes.[30] *Kolokol,* free Russian newspaper published in London by Herzen and Ogarev, addressed the subject of the Bezdna massacre in several issues. We can trace Shchapov's influence in the way Herzen and Ogarev approached this topic. Since it was widely known that Anton Petrov was a *sectarian*, they finish their report on the events of April 12, 1861 with a direct appeal to the "brothers-*Raskol'niki*" as keepers of the ideal freedom:

> And you, our unfortunate brothers-*Raskol'niki*, who suffered a lot, but never mixed with Russia of the landlords, executioners, and killers of the unarmed – keep the day of new passions, April 12, in your memory. ... Strengthen your spirit and remember the cry with which the Bezdna martyrs were dying: Liberty! Liberty![31]

In addition, in the footnote, reporting about the office for the dead in Kazan'' and Shchapov's arrest, *The Bell* concludes: "At least, somebody of shaved Russia would not be considered as Germans and advocates of serfdom."[32] Some words are so telling in this sentence! 'Germans' and 'advocates of serfdom' appear together as some ultimate (and self-evident!) foes. Others, probably, denote Herzen's apprehension of the Russian peasantry. But these habitual contrasts (Russians-Germans, liberated peasants-advocates of serfdom) are tinged here with another one: "shaved Russia" (britaia Rossiia) of the upper classes means a hidden juxtaposition with "unshaved Russia," which does not mean all peasantry, but precisely the Old Believers, who strenuously fought for centuries for the right to wear beards. The presence of this allusion to the Old Belief reminds us again that Herzen and Ogarev were still under the spell of Shchapov's first book and believed in the free spirit of the Old Belief, while Shchapov himself, as we have seen, switched his attention over to God's People.

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[30] One instance of this incommensurability, reported in *The Bell*, is particularly striking: several elders were waiting for the "tsar's messenger" and the military detachment in front of the village Bezdna with bread and salt (the traditional Russian rite of welcoming, of hospitality), but Apraksin, the tsar's messenger and the commander of the detachment, ordered his troops to move them out of the way. He was afraid that a bomb might have been hidden in a loaf of bread.

[31] *Kolokol. Gazeta A. I. Gertsena i N. P. Ogareva.* Vyp. 4 (1861), p. 849.

After the church service for the dead, Shchapov was arrested and sent to St-Petersburg. As a result, his name became inseparably linked with the Bezdna tragedy. In the next issue of *The Bell*, in the section "Medley" (Smes'), which usually consisted of venomous remarks addressed to government officials, journalists, or other public figures, one could read: "What happened to professor Shchapov? Where is he being tried? He is in the Third Department,[33] they say. How is he there, after Timashev?"[34]

Unexpectedly, the transmutations of Shchapov's fortune seemed to be over, as soon as the much-hated Third Department started to take care of him. Later he admitted to Aristov that he was at first placed in "the excellent room, with high ceiling, three large windows, and such cleanliness as he never had in his room."[35] "I should think so," remarks Aristov.[36] Shchapov was asked to provide a detailed explanation of what happened in Kazan''. He started with the sketch of the bitter-humble life of the Russian people, in the spirit of his introductory lecture, and concluded with complete repentance and the assurance he was so agitated that he could not remember any faces of the present students. Either repentance seemed so sincere, or publicity over the Bezdna massacre and Shchapov's arrest was so frightening,[37] that our historian was pardoned without a trial and even bailed out by P. A. Valuev, minister of the internal affairs. Moreover, Valuev even employed Shchapov at the ministry, as the specialist on the schism, and kindly informed him that his most important responsibility would be to continue his research.

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[32] Ibid.

[33] The Third Department of His Majesty's Own Chancery, the political police, was created by Nicholas I and came to symbolize the stifling character of his reign.

[34] *Kolokol*, p. 860.

A popular historian, forbidden to teach, with a halo of political martyr arcund his head, what was Shchapov to do in the capital? Could he seize the opportunity of Valuev proposition, plunge again into the dusty realm of schismatic manuscripts, of secret reports and circulars? Could he, who only recently revealed the mystery of the schism and the essence of the whole Russian history, return to the life of an anchorite? Of course, the answer was a firm "no." At this time of general fermentation, he was bound to participate in public life, to express openly his opinion on the most vital issues, to cooperate with other freedom-seeking authors.

Cooperative societies of different kinds were extremely popular among the educated youth of the early 1860s. In late 1861, Shchapov joined a group of writers, who, in a very characteristic attempt, started to publish a journal collectively. This journal, *Vek* (Century), was a short-lived enterprise. It was closed in April 1862, after four months of existence.[38] Next year, *Ocherki (Sketches),* a "political and literary newspaper," also did not survive the divergence in views of its founders.[39] We will not follow Shchapov in all troubles and challenges of his metropolitan life and journalistic career, which was often interrupted, including by his tragic exile in Siberia.

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[35] Several weeks later he was transferred to a hospital.

[36] Aristov, p. 68. On the preceding pages, Aristov devoted several paragraphs to the description of the usual mess in Shchapov's apartment in Kazan''.

[37] During the investigation preceding the "trial of 32," the case of people who were accused in dealings with the propagandists from London, N. Serno-Solovievich, who was not even acquainted with Shchapov, had to explain why he composed a petition in support of Shchapov and collected signatures under that petition – a sign that the publicity around Shchapov's case was worrisome for the government.

N. S. Leskov distinguished two camps in the ranks of the intelligentsia of the 1860s: the gradualists and the impatients (*postepenovtsy* and *neterpelivtsy*). Having joined one of them, no matter which one – both were in constant battle with each other and with the old order – Shchapov lost his interest in Old Belief. The fight for a better future for Russia was an all-consuming task; there was no time to look back. In the articles of this period, Shchapov uses the word Old Belief (*staroverstvo*) just as a cliché, a convenient designation of everything old and obsolete. For example, he writes about the Slavophiles, whom he so much admired in the 1850s, that their "teaching is distinguished by its one-sided national discrimination and a Moscow-born historical old belief."[40] "Old belief" in this quotation has an obvious scornful connotation in addition to insipid commonplaceness of this whole phrase. An inveterate advocate of progress *has to* scorn the archconservative intellectual movement. Old Belief is pigeonholed and labeled; it has lost its vital importance for Shchapov's personal identity.

Let us review the results of this study. One can hardly overestimate the popularity and importance of the Shchapov's first book, devoted to Old Belief. N. I. Subbotin, whose opinion on the book is not very high, describing his meeting with the minister of interior V. K. Plehve in 1903, indignantly notes that Shchapov's book was the only work on the schism that the minister ever read.[41] In this talented and confused book, Shchapov proposes and maintains three approaches to this subject: Old Belief, first – as a part of Russian cultural past, an expression of popular mentality, second – as only a part of church history, and third – as a democratic movement. Further, we will study in detail each approach, its proponents and its corollaries for Russian identity. Shchapov's figure is symbolic for the late 1850s, when public opinion on the Old Belief was not yet formed.

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[38] B. Koz'min "Artel'nyi zhurnal "Vek," *Russkaia zhurnalisitika. T. I. Shestidesiatye gody* (Moskva-Leningrad: Academia, 1930): 17-50.

[39] S. Breitburg "K istorii gazety "Ocherki," *Russkaia zhurnalisitika. T. I*, pp. 51-71.

[40] A. P. Shchapov "Novaia era. Na rubezhe dvukh tysiacheletii," Sochineniia *A. P. Shchapova*, t. 4, p. 4.

According to Leskov, who had very wide circle of acquaintance in St-Petersburg Old Believer community, *Raskol'niki* were unpleasantly surprised by Shchapov's insistence on the democratic character of their movement. They said: "What kind of dymocrats are we? What silliness!"[42] Shchapov's book served as an introduction to the problem of the schism for Russian intelligentsia. Despite all deficiencies, one cannot but admire Shchapov's zeal and animation over his subject. Later, when he began to teach at the university and formulated the concept of Russian history, he needed, for the sake of strictness, to pursue a single approach. The schism was now a part of Shchapov's regional theory of Russian history. Interpreting the whole Russian schism as a popular democratic movement, he switched his attention from the Old Belief to the Christ Faith and then discarded his interest in the schism altogether. His political engagement appeared to be incompatible with his historical interests. But youthful zeal of his first book inspired another revolutionary, V. I. Kel'siev, to agitate the Old Believers, to live and work among them. I will devote next part of this chapter to Kel'siev's vain and tragic endeavor.

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[41] V. S. Markov *K istorii raskola-staroobriadchestva vtoroi poloviny XIX stoletiia. Perepiska professora N. I. Subbotina, preimushchestvenno neizdannaia, kak material dlia istorii raskola i otnoshenii k nemu pravitel'stva (1865-1904gg.)* (Moskva, 1914): 642.

2.2 From Texts to Revolution and Back: The Bitter Fate of Vasily Kel'siev

> To throw stones at Kel'siev is unnecessary; the whole roadway has been thrown at him.
>
> A. I. Herzen

V. I. Kel'siev was neither a historian, nor a writer, nor an important political figure. He did not bring any new insights into the discourse about the schism. What he did bring though, was his own life and the lives of his family members. He was so fascinated with the world of Russian religious dissent and so much believed in Shchapov's ideas that he took it upon himself to put those ideas into practice and establish cooperation between the sectarians and the revolutionaries. He failed, however.

As A. Etkind puts it in the introduction to his book, "Russian literature, philosophy, and political thought are not mirrors of the Russian revolution; on the contrary, revolutions were accomplished in texts and from there looked at their historical reflection, always dim and faulty."[43] Kelsiev's attempt at propaganda among the *Raskolniki* might be an illustration to this approach: his futile activity does seem dim and faulty in comparison with Shchapov's ideas that inspired him. But if we consider his whole life, the question immediately comes up whether the relationship between texts and revolutions is a two-way street. Did his practical failure influence further reasoning

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[42] N. S. Leskov "Narodniki i raskolovedy na sluzhbe," *Sobranie sochinenii v 11-ti tomakh*, t. 11 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1958): 40.

[43] A. Etkind *Khlyst*, p. 21.

on this problem? Can his disillusionment and lost life be considered a rejoinder to all-Russian discussion about the *Raskolniki*? Thus, our task in this study is to determine how and why, if at all, Kelsiev's catastrophe was important for the Russian discourse.

First, we have to relate the circumstances of Kel'siev's failure. Our sources on the subject are not numerous: Kel'siev's writings, especially *Confession*,[44] Herzen's memoirs, and materials of the "case of the 32."[45] In short, inspired by revolutionary ideas young Kel'siev emigrated to London with the intention to propagandize, to work for *The Bell*. For a while, he was helping Herzen and Ogarev in editorial matters. One day, Herzen gave him materials on the *Raskolniki*, including their own writings and official secret reports. Kelsiev edited four volumes of these materials in London; he then, undertook an undercover trip to Russia in order to establish connections between the Old Believers and the revolutionaries. Although neither Old Believers, nor revolutionaries had taken his endeavor seriously, and nothing came out of it, most of the people whom he contacted were arrested later. Subsequently, he left for Turkey in order to agitate Russian Old Believers who lived there. Having spent several years among the *Raskolniki*, he realized that this mission was hopeless. His brother, his wife, and his children died during these years due to diseases and unendurable poverty. In 1867, notorious "state criminal Vasily Kelsiev" arrived at the Russian border and gave himself up to the authorities. While in prison, he wrote his *Confession* expressing despair, repentance, and new conservative convictions. He was pardoned by the tsar, for a short time became a popular figure, and died five years later in utter poverty.

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[44] V. I. Kel'siev "Ispoved'," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, t. 41-42 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1941): 265-470.

Herzen remembered him at their first meeting as "a rather tall, thin, sickly looking young man with a rectangular skull and a thick crop of hair on his head." All in all, Herzen gives sympathetic, if a little condescending, characteristic of young Kel'siev:

> At the first glance one could discern in him much that was inharmonious and unstable, but nothing that was vulgar. It was evident that he had escaped to freedom from every form of tutelage and serfdom, but had not enrolled himself in the service of any cause or party: he belonged to no guild. He... had studied everything in the world and learnt nothing thoroughly, read everything of every sort, and worried his brains over it all fruitlessly enough. Through continual criticism of every accepted idea, Kel'siev had shaken his moral conceptions without acquiring any clue as to conduct.[46]

Herzen regards Kel'siev as a representative of a new generation, which came to the fore, as he puts it, "at the time of our awakening in the din of the Sevastopol cannon."[47] Herzen stresses intellectual confusion of this new generation of "extremely hard-working young men." On a similar note, almost in the very same words, Kel'siev calls this period "a feverish time" when "everybody were rushing around as if half-awakened by the Sevastopol massacre; eyes were not accustomed to light yet, mind – to understanding, hands – to work."[48] One can find a similar assessment in the memoirs of N. V. Shelgunov, an influential figure in the revolutionary circles. First of all, his account was also reminiscent of the Russian failure in the Crimean war:

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[45] M. Lemke *Ocherki osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia "shestidesiatykh godov." Po neizdannym documentam s portretami* (SPb: Izdatel'stvo O. N. Popovoi, 1908). Many documents concerning "the case of 32" are published in this book.

[46] A. I. Herzen *My Past and Thoughts,* vol. 3 (New York: Alfred H. Knopf, 1968): 1329

[47] Ibid., p. 1330.

[48] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 286.

> When it appeared that Russia had neither money, nor men in order to continue the war, when two such surprises as the death of the emperor Nicholas I and seizure of Sevastopol followed each other as two harrowing blows, Russia woke up as though from a lethargic sleep... After Sevastopol, we all regained consciousness, started to think, and think critically; this is the clue for unraveling the secret of the sixties.[49]

Two main features of the 1860s come up from all accounts: awakening and confusion. Keen interest in all "contemporary" problems – scientific, social, political – everything seemed important, and intellectual disarray, inability to sort out all these problems. But even at this time of disorientation, old patterns of perception were kept intact. Kel'siev followed such a pattern when he juxtaposed *Raskol'niki*, as the genuine Russian people, the truth-seekers, to the indifferent Western folk, alluding to "boredom and hypocrisy of every Sunday" in the West. In fact, he reproduced the age-old paradigm of Russia and the West by delegating the *Raskol'niki* to be "the most popular and most active force in Russia," thereby tacitly admitting that only they represent true Russia. Kel'siev fell in love with the schism, suddenly and wholeheartedly.

One could say that Kel'siev's sudden infatuation with the schism was to blame for all his misfortunes. As we can see from Herzen's portrayal, he was a romantic youth in search of a cause. Remembering the day when he received from Herzen a sack with documents concerning the schism, Kel'siev asserted that Herzen did not deem these papers very significant, and only the sensation created by the Shchapov's book made him recall their existence. He merely wanted Kel'siev to look through and sort them for possible publication in *The Bell*. Apparently, it was a complete overturn for Kel'siev. In the *Confession* he wrote: "I did not sleep all night, reading. I was almost a bit touched, as if my life was broken, as if I was a different man. Indeed, had Herzen not given me these documents, I still would have been a revolutionary, a nihilist. They saved me."[50] Clearly, if this set of documents and manuscripts made him "a different man," Kel'siev was looking for a cause in order to find himself.

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[49] N. V. Shelgunov "Vospominaniia. Iz proshlogo i nastoiashchego," in *Sochineniia v 3-kh tomakh,* t. 2. 3-e izd. (St. Petersburg, 1904): 632.

Does it mean that young Kelsiev was uncertain of his own identity? His father came from a very poor gentry family, his mother – from the ecclesiastical estate. His education consisted of ten years of commercial school (1845-1855) and two years of university (1855-1857). He entered commercial school at the age of ten. At that age he was sincerely Orthodox, but the school gradually made him an atheist. Most of the teachers, including the principal and the inspector, were not Russian and not Orthodox: children deemed that somehow "Orthodoxy and science did not get on."[51] The formality of the prayers before and after classes and the formality of the weekly lessons on the Divine Law raised doubts, dried up the faith. But still, when this young skeptic came to London, he had an aura of "mystical fancies" around him. In Herzen's words, "the flavor of the Church, its manner of speech and imagery, were retained in his deportment, his language, his style, and gave his whole life a peculiar character, a peculiar unity, based on welding together of antithetical metals."[52]

Kel'siev himself admitted that he was always interested in "everything mysterious, fanciful, bizarre." "This, he continues, made me to master Chinese language in my childhood, this took away several months of my youth, which were spent in studying Egyptian and Mexican hieroglyphs, then pulled me into learning Buddhism, Confucianism and other Oriental religions."[53] In this admission the schism is considered en bloc with all other "mysterious and fanciful" subjects of interest. Obviously, the author regarded the schism as something strange and fanciful if he could pair it with Egyptian hieroglyphs or Confucianism. At first, the originality of *Raskol'niki*'s philosophizing attracted him. Then, he realized that this ten million mass could become an unprecedented revolutionary force if only it acquired the right leadership. He thought he was ready to become such a leader.

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[50] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 285.
[51] Ibid., p. 272.

When Kel'siev decided to stay in London, he dreamed about a successful literary career. Herzen rejected his very first article on the "women's question" as absolutely hopeless. Kel'siev also saw himself as a political leader, but his role in *The Bell* was secondary: he had to look through Russian correspondence, prepare notes, and proofread. The materials on the schism seemed to bring a new meaning to his life and salvation to his almost ruined ambitions. Kel'siev often argued with Herzen about the role of the London group in the revolutionary movement. Herzen saw himself as only a propagandist, Kel'siev wanted him to be a political leader, an organizer. Since Herzen was unyielding, Kel'siev decided to take it upon himself to agitate among the *Raskol'niki* and to establish close connections between them and revolutionary circles in Russia.

Theoretically, Kel'siev starts exactly where Shchapov loses his interest in the Old Belief: he takes up the thesis that Russian history is "a continuous fight between two opposing principles: state unity versus personal and regional independence." He even reinforces Shchapov's argument and presents the religious character of the schism as

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[52] Herzen *My Past and Thoughts,* vol. 3, p. 1329.
[53] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 286.

almost a contingency: "The schism was a protest not only against the government, but also against the church."[54] In Shchapov's case, we saw how political engagement could destroy genuine historical interest. As for Kel'siev, political ambitions and designs dominated his perception of the schism from the very beginning. When he argues that the Priestist denomination is right because it keeps all the sacred, pre-Nikonian rituals and books, it is hard to determine whether these are his true thoughts or just a ruse, so necessary in order to secure an alliance with the *Raskol'niki*.

Preparing the collection of materials on the schism for publication, he started to plan a journey to Galicia and Turkey in order to meet local *Raskol'niki*, to establish, with their help, connections with *Raskol'niki* in Russia, and to set up a printing-house. Herzen and Ogarev deemed such a journey premature and aimless. They had to be cautious, they were prepared to act only if *Raskol'niki* themselves approached them and asked for help in setting up the printing-house. But twenty-five-year-old Kel'siev suspected another reason for their refusal to let him go: "my journey, my agitating activities would certainly push me into the foreground, and my name would eclipse their names, so that their importance as publicists would be eclipsed by my importance as an agitator."[55] Interestingly, Kel'siev's apparent vanity and hare-brained schemes did not provoke scorn or anger among his older friends and superiors. He was so young and so sincere; nobody ever doubted his courage and his devotion to the cause. It is with warmth and kind smile that Herzen in his memoirs recalls Kel'siev passing his hands through his thick hair and saying sadly: "Not yet thirty, and so much responsibility already taken upon my shoulders."[56]

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[54] V. I. Kel'siev, ed. *Sbornik pravitel'stvennykh svedenii o raskol'nikakh*, vyp. 1 (London: Trubner & Co., 1860): III-IV.

[55] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 289.

While editing and preparing for publication four volumes of documents concerning the schism, Kel'siev worked day and night. For example, when somebody sent to London Nadezhdin's *Investigation of the Emasculates' Heresy*, with the request to return it shortly, Kel'siev alone copied the whole book by hand. The Ministry of Internal Affairs secretly published a few copies of this book in 1845, which were inaccessible to the public, whereas Kel'siev deemed the publication of the book on the *Skoptsy* a very important matter. It is hard to underestimate the significance of all four volumes of documents for the Russian discourse. They were sold out very quickly. Like everything published in London, *Collections* appeared in Russia in a short time and became widely known despite their illegality. According to many contemporaries, their appearance certainly eased the legal publication of many more documents and materials on the subject.

But the collection played another important role to which few paid attention. *Collections* brought into the 1860s official opinions and materials of the 1840s and 1850s, but not all of those "notes" and "reports" were mere denunciations, as young Kelsiev presented them in his introduction. Although many were honest and insightful attempts to examine the matter, the whole atmosphere of "secret committees" prompted their authors to look for enemies of the state. Thereby the materials written by loyal government officials in the past reinforced the political perception of the schism, initiated by Shchapov and so popular in the 1860s. Some of the presented materials became very popular and were imprinted in public opinion. To give but one example, let us take the note written by the councilor of State, count S. S. Stenbok about the sect of Wanderers. Stenbok cites the following spiritual poem as an expression of "the protest against contemporary civil order":

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[56] Herzen *My Past and Thoughts*, p. 1334.

> I cannot help but weep,
> For piety's cut down and burned for firewood,
> Dishonesty is ever green and blooming:
> Spiritual law is cut off where it stood,
> And urban law destroyed by forces all-consuming;
> The lawlessness now replaces law,
> And in the cities evildoers rule,
> The only local rulers are the cruel,
> And over the country daily watch does keep
> The will of Antichrist,
> I cannot help but weep.[57]

Stenbok concludes that these verses show the "recalcitrant spirit of the schism," even though the author, clearly, just "weeps" over all the misfortunes, does not call for struggle. This poem was reproduced many times during the 1860s and 1870s, in books and articles, whenever an author needed to prove the rebellious character of the *Raskol'niki* or their preparedness to join the revolution. No wonder, Kel'siev, a revolutionary, found the *Raskol'niki* congenial.

Like Shchapov before him, he seemed to identify himself with religious dissenters. Arguing that Russians in general are indifferent to religion, he explains all the passions and fanaticism of the *Raskol'niki* by the innate need for self-expression, characteristic of the Russian people, as opposed to the Westerners: "It is not the truth that we seek in the Faith, as other Indo-Europeans do, we seek those moot dogmas... that give a dissenting an opportunity of self-assertion."[58] He was preparing documents for publication, dreaming about the quaint world of sectarianism, and feverishly waiting for a possible contact with this world.

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[57] Cited in S. S. Stenbok "Kratkii vzgliad na prichiny rasprostranenniia raskola," in Kelsiev *Sbornik*, vol. 4 (London: Trubner, 1862): 327. I am grateful to my daughter, Sonya, for this translation.

In November 1861, one Old Believer, who introduced himself as Polikarp Petrov, a merchant, appeared in London and met with Kel'siev. During the six weeks that Polikarp spent in London, he had many discussions with Kel'siev about the schism and its possible cooperation with revolutionary circles. Kel'siev helped him to rent a room next to his own rented apartment, and during six weeks of Polikarp's sojourn in London, they met every day and developed a close friendship, according to Kel'siev. Kel'siev was enchanted by his interlocutor: "What a power of intellect, what intellectual abilities this man possesses not even having received any formal education, developing himself only by reading church books!!!"[59] This visit did mean that the Old Believers had noticed Kel'siev's activities. He was certainly encouraged by this contact and continued with additional vigor. Since Polikarp told him on parting that his trip to Russia would be helpful, Kel'siev had to oblige.

In 1862, Kel'siev procured some money and undertook a conspiratorial trip to Moscow in order to establish permanent relations with the Old Believers. In Herzen's opinion, "the audacity of this trip borders on insanity; its recklessness was almost criminal."[60] Kel'siev managed to secure some questionable connections with the Old Believers and to escape from Russia. But his activities in Russia triggered several arrests. Many people were interrogated in connection with Kel'siev's visit. One of the revolutionaries, with whom Kel'siev met in 1862, wrote to Herzen at the end of that year, informing him that arrests started: "The journey of the pilgrim is still to bring much evil."[61]

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[58] Kelsiev *Sbornik*, vol. 1, p. XIII.
[59] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 299.

Many details of this journey are revealing for an understanding of Kel'siev's personality and the nature of the Old Believers' interest in his endeavors. Let us consider it in some detail. Just two months after Polikarp's departure from London, an inspired Kel'siev, under the name of a Turkish citizen Vasily Yani, arrived in St. Petersburg. There, he discovered the true identity of his London visitor. His name was indeed Polikarp Petrovich Ovchinnikov, but he was also well known as an influential Old Believer bishop, Pafnuty of Kolomna (1827 – 1907).[62] Pafnuty and his followers sought to reform and invigorate their Priestist denomination. Pafnuty's visit to London meant that at least this group of aspired reformers seriously considered contacts with revolutionaries.

Upon arrival in St. Petersburg, Kel'siev stayed first with the undercover correspondent of *The Bell* and former schoolfellow Nichiporenko, and subsequently in the house of N. Serno-Solovievich, one of the leaders of the revolutionary organization *Zemlia i Volia* (Land and Liberty). Nichiporenko introduced him to S. V. Maksimov, a writer and ethnographer, who was well informed on the question of schism. Kel'siev lamented in the *Confession* that Maksimov did not have any useful information, because he "hardly paid any attention to the political meaning of the schism."[63] This case is exemplary for understanding Kel'siev's aspirations at the time. He was reading documents and manuscripts on the schism virtually in isolation, and, finally, he had met a specialist on the *Raskolniki*. Finally, he meets a man who visited real sectarians, who talked to them, studied their beliefs, and listened to their songs. What does he do? He asks the scholar for information on their political views, and political views only, not being able to obtain such information, he quickly loses any interest in this specialist.

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[60] Herzen *My Past and Thoughts*, p. 1333.
[61] "Pis'mo V. I. Kasatkina A. I. Gertsenu," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, t. 41-42 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1941): 53.

During the week that he spent in St. Petersburg, he met with a much more interesting interlocutor, an influential monk of the sect of Fedoseevtsy (Theodoseans) of Priestless denomination, their famous theologian, Paul the Prussian. Paul was the abbot of the Theodosian monastery in East Prussia. At the time of meeting with Kel'siev, he also had entered Russia illegally. Despite his own teaching about "spiritual Antichrist," about contemporary authorities as "Antichrist's precursors," his answer to Kel'siev's proposition was firm: "Our religion does not allow us to go against the authorities."[64] Discouraged by this retort, but also reassured by Paul's invitation to visit his monastery, Kel'siev moved to Moscow where he hoped to meet again with Pafnuty (Polikarp).

Reportedly, Pafnuty was in Moscow at that time, but had an awful nightmare on the eve of Kel'siev's arrival.[65] He took it as a bad omen and asked to inform Kel'siev that he had left Moscow and would not be able to return for their meeting. This was a great

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[62] Later, Pafnuty developed close relations with famous Russian writer, N. S. Leskov. It is partly through discussions with him that Leskov acquired his extensive knowledge of the Old Belief.

[63] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 311.

[64] Ibid., p. 331.

[65] N. I. Subbotin *Raskol kak orudie vrazhdebnykh Rossii partii* (Moskva, 1867): 131. This pamphlet was first published in installments, in 1866-67, in Katkov's *Russkii vestnik*.

disappointment for Kel'siev, but he had another contact there, which Pafnuty had given him in London: a certain merchant, Ivan Ivanovich Shibaev. Shibaev was a young man in his twenties, "an enthusiast" and "a dreamer." He did not have enough weight in the Old Believer community in order to initiate cooperation with the revolutionaries, but he did have some friends and acquaintances (his circle, so to speak) that started to think and talk about acquiring civil rights. Again, Kel'siev was disappointed: "From the very first words, I realized that they hardly understood anything in politics and even did not know what I was talking about."[66] Knowing that he came all the way from London, they were expecting that he was going to at least summon them to an insurrection and were genuinely surprised when he started with the proposition about publication of their books. They readily supplied him with manuscripts, but once more, were surprised to learn that money might be needed for publication. Apparently, they viewed London revolutionaries as powerful demi-Gods and wanted to get any kind of help from them. While the old generation of Old Believers was quite happy with the relaxation that the new reign brought for them, these young men wanted more freedom, but were powerless in their community, so they placed their hopes upon the revolutionaries. Kel'siev promised them London periodicals supporting the Old Believers in their fight for civil rights; they promised to get some money for the printing-house. So they parted, and shortly afterwards Shibaev was arrested and spent two years in prison for his connections with "state criminal Vasily Kel'siev."

Meantime, Kel'siev returned to St. Petersburg, illegally crossed the border, and visited Paul the Prussian at his monastery. Although at first Paul refused to cooperate with the revolutionaries, the contact with him was the only one of lasting importance for the Londoners. Paul was enthusiastic about the possibility of publication of materials concerning the schism. "Please, print, he said, print everything, either for us or against us. We have to know on what others base their argument and why Christ's church is divided into schisms and heresies."[67] For several years after this meeting, Paul and his assistant, Golubov, were receiving materials from London and writing articles for Herzen's publications. Another important result of the journey – being in Kenigsberg, Kel'siev established a channel for smuggling printed materials into Russia.

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[66] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 321.

Thus, upon his return to London, Kel'siev had every reason to be proud of his accomplishments. He even started to plan another trip, but very soon his whole scheme was ruined. Russian police arrested a certain P. A. Vetoshnikov, a "calm and modest man," who had visited Herzen and was carrying some correspondence from London to Russia. According to Kel'siev, many Russian visitors considered it an honor to take letters from London to Russia. The letters were addressed to N. A. Serno-Solovievich and I. I. Shibaev among others. In the course of the investigation of the Vetoshnikov affair, the authorities found out everything about Kel'siev's endeavors and, by arresting most of his connections, destroyed all his arrangements. Kel'siev was overwhelmed by moral responsibility, especially in connection with the arrest and imprisonment of Vetoshnikov, who "never meddled in anything." In the *Confession* he wrote:

> For several days I was broken-hearted when we received the news about his arrest. Everything was lost and everybody attacked us with reproaches and moral admonitions. In addition, an outcry against us was going on in Russia. This was stifling, unbearably hard. To run became an urgent need, to run, no matter where. It was necessary to find a cause in order to forget grief in fighting. It was

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[67] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 333-4.

> necessary to start everything from the beginning, I broke down and fled to Turkey.[68]

Before starting a new, Turkish, chapter of Kel'siev's life, we have to draw some interim conclusions. These conclusions are necessarily shaky. Most of the sources concerning Kel'siev's sojourn in Russia, including his own *Confession*, were written by people under investigation. We will never know how sincere they were in their admissions. Let us consider, for example, a testimonial of Kel'siev's personality, which was given by N. A. Serno-Solovievich during one of the interrogations. It almost coincided with the Herzen's opinion on Kel'siev. Serno-Solovievich recalled their encounter in London:

> I have seen him there only once. At first sight, it was clear that he was not a political figure. Apparently, he was a man of good heart, but ailing, nervous, sensitive. Moreover, the study of theological questions left a very strange mark on him. He will easily arouse sympathy for himself personally, but will always engender disbelief to the cause, in which he is involved.[69]

During the interrogation, Serno-Solovievich characterized Kel'siev's trip as a "complete failure." Most of the scholars who write about Kel'siev tend to agree with this assessment. I will cite here in full Serno's answer about Kel'siev's trip to Russia, because the attitude to Kel'siev is often founded upon this judgment:

> Even without knowing him personally, one can evaluate his character by the circumstances and letters. Evidently, he comes to Russia with a fake passport. He chooses a Turkish one, even though he most likely does not speak the Turkish

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[68] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 344.

[69] M. Lemke *Ocherki osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia shectidesiatykh godov*, p. 192.

language. Even though he takes on a different last name, he keeps his first name. Pretending to be a foreigner, he speaks such good Russian that it causes great amazement in the hotels. For a while he lives in Moscow and is not worried about acquiring a visa for leaving Russia. He is forced to cross the border on foot and is captured by the Prussian police... He orders books and cannot pick them up from the printing house because of lack of money. He does not even have enough funds to acquire a type font, yet he plans the distribution of material for which several thousand rubles have to be spent. He calculates revenue of 100% and in the next letter this number is replaced by 500%. With such a personality, he comes under weight of very grave circumstances... He has no source of income and a family to take care of. Moral suffering and physical deprivation have exhausted him. He is surrounded by a cold people who will definitely not lend a helping hand to a foreigner, especially a Russian one. The only possible source of income – the publishing of books – has been exhausted. Trubner [Herzen's publisher – E. K.] publishes reluctantly. Then he makes the decision to go to Russia. If the trip had any other goal besides family affairs, evidently, it was a failure. Most likely, all those whom he addressed answered: "We will see, this matter needs some consideration" – the words with which businesspeople usually decline. Realizing his failure, he probably had the idea that the venture will be more successful if Herzen and Ogarev participate in it, and he began to seek their friendship. This could not happen very soon, since they had very little in common. It is evident from the letters that negotiations dragged on from the Kelsiev's return and did not lead to anything substantial. Finally, Herzen, either as an experiment or under the

> pressure of the circumstances agreed to cooperate on a paper, separate from "The Bell". Kel'siev now imagined himself to be a man of politics. Meanwhile he was doubly excited since the time of the exhibition had come. First, the cost of living is going up, his family is almost driven out of the apartment. Second, a lot of Russians arrive; stories and talks are a plenty. All this excites this nervous and sensitive man in the extreme. An opportunity arises to write to Russia. To write in his circumstances is almost the only pleasure, because it does not cost him anything. He recalls everyone to whom he has a smallest opportunity to write and writes for several days. Letters completely enchant him. He forgets his recent failure and lack of means not only to propagandize but also to print. He takes hopes for the reality, requests for promises, his own suppositions for somebody's deeds. Thus, a lot of disjointed propositions of propaganda appear, but all of them, by their aims and available means, are just castles in the air.[70]

Roughly speaking, this long excerpt may be divided into two parts. The first one is a long list of Kel'siev's blunders, which any inexperienced revolutionary could easily commit; the second – a view on his personal circumstances. The first part makes the reader laugh at Kel'siev; after reading the second, anyone would take pity on this poor soul. Derision and pity, these two sentiments are to destroy even a thought about Kel'siev as a serious revolutionary. The narration is powerfully organized, it pulls the reader into its own explanation of events, makes he/she believe. It skillfully prepares the reader for acceptance of the last sentences, which strongly suggest that any revolutionary activity in Kel'siev's letters from London to Russia is just a matter of his imagination. It is obvious, that the only goal of this long excerpt is to diminish the importance of Kel'siev himself in general and of his letters in particular. Suffice it to mention that in the same statement Serno-Solovievich conceals the truth at least twice: when he denies that Kel'siev stayed in his apartment and when he asserts that he "does not remember" handing him money. We should not forget that here we deal with materials of investigation, and Serno-Solovievich is probably trying to protect himself and his friends by presenting all Kel'siev's efforts as worthless.

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[70] M. Lemke *Ocherki*, p. 195-6.

His arguments sounded very persuasive. Even M. Lemke, who edited the collection of materials on the "case of 32," commented in the footnote that these two paragraphs present "excellent analysis of Kelsiev's activity in general and during his visit to Russia in particular."[71] However, Paul Call, who wrote Kelsiev's biography, completely disregarded these two paragraphs. Why? Apparently, he was of different opinion about Kel'siev's undertakings. He called Kel'siev's connection with Shibaev "a significant step forward in his drive to penetrate the inner circles of the Moscow community of the Old Believers."[72] Call took the whole affair seriously and thought that Kel'siev in his *Confession* was trying to play down Shibaev's importance in order to minimize his own revolutionary activities of the early sixties. I tend to agree with Call rather than with Lemke. According to all accounts, Kel'siev emerges as a practical man, full of initiative. If for Herzen and Ogarev revolution was a matter of theorizing, Kel'siev and others like him needed to act. Although he blamed himself for Russian arrests, he did accomplish a lot in such a short journey. Without even being aware of it, he commenced a certain tradition: subsequently, "the work among sectarians" would always be important for the Populists and, later, even for the Bolsheviks.

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[71] M. Lemke *Ocherki*, p. 195.

What little we know about Kel'siev's life in Turkey confirms our conclusion that he was first and foremost a practical man. He arrived in Constantinople and made connections with several Old Believer communities trying to propagandize and persuade them to establish a printing press. He heard some vague promises, nothing was accomplished, he felt miserable and gradually lost faith in people, in revolution, in all his former ideals. This is the description of this profound change in his own words:

> I believed in equality. Turkey, a country without aristocracy, broke this belief. To live there is impossible, because there are no independent people, because there are no family traditions to prevent a person from meanness... I believed in the people, in fact, this belief proved to lead only to stupefaction, to patriotic egoism, to injustice. I believed that people may be persuaded with logic, but it appeared that their habits and traditions muffled in them the voice of reason.[73]

At this time of doubts and uncertainty, Kel'siev was joined in Constantinople by his brother, Ivan, who recently had been sentenced to imprisonment in Russia for his participation in student political unrest but managed to escape. Ivan was eager to agitate, "to go to the people" and he soon moved to Dobrudja, the Turkish province, which was located between the Danube and the Black sea. The Russians who lived there were Old Believer Cossacks, Nekrasovtsy. In the first chapter, we mentioned a group of the Don Cossacks, who, under the leadership of their ataman, Ignat Nekrasov, crossed the Turkish border in order to save themselves, when Bulavin's uprising was suppressed. The descendants of these Cossacks lived in the northern part of the province of Dobrudja. There were about 8,000 of Nekrasovtsy in the Danube region. The agitation was not

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[72] P. Call *Vasily I. Kelsiev: An Encounter Between the Russian Revolutionaries and the Old Believers* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979): 97.

successful, Ivan had to look for a job, and after months of going hungry, he found a teaching position.

A little later, Kel'siev's family also arrived from London and Kelsiev, who was now also in desperate need of a job, received a position of *kazak-bashi*, an interpreter and advisor on Old Believers' affairs for the governor of Dobrudja. Now the brothers were together, and the family was even relatively self-sufficient. The people around them were dull and uneducated, so the brothers dreamed about creating a community of exiled revolutionaries in Dobrudja and wrote to Herzen with the proposal to send to them a needy emigrant. But this relative prosperity lasted for only a few months. Kel'siev described these several months of hard work as the happiest ones in his life. Soon, he came down with typhus, then, his brother also caught this illness and died. At the same time, Kel'siev lost his position of *kazak-bashi*. In his words, "Everything was lost – beliefs, the brother, hopes – the opportunity itself to live in a human way."[74]

Meantime, several "needy emigrants" arrived in Dobrudja. At first, Kel'siev came up with the idea of opening a gymnasium, but with the arrival of a new governor, this dream proved to be a vain one. One of his comrades committed suicide; others left him. There was no means to support the family. Now his only desire was "to break away from this desert, where there were neither books, nor journals, nor people." He took his wife and two children and moved to the Moldavian town of Galatz where he started to work as a rock crusher hoping soon to go to Paris. Here, in Galatz, his children died one after another followed soon by his wife. Now he was absolutely alone in the world. In addition to these tragedies, the Russian consul, who was informed about Kel'siev's previous

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[73] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 369-70.
[74] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 382.

revolutionary activity, asked his employer to dismiss him. It is hard to imagine how he spent that winter in Galatz, penniless, homeless, a heavy drinker.

Kelsiev's attempt to work among the Old Believers was an obvious failure. He decided to become a scholar and, with the help of a Serbian ship-captain, moved to Vienna. Once there, he started to write and publish articles in Russian journals under the pseudonym Ivanov-Zheludkov. Apparently, his honoraria were so substantial that he could go to the Vienna University to study Old Slavonic and Sanskrit, join the Slavic Club in Vienna, and travel. His articles were in demand and he received about two hundred rubles a month. Why did he leave this comfortable life and gave himself up to the Russian authorities?

First, his contacts with the members of the Slavic Club made him reconsider his approach to the national question in Russia. Previously, following Herzen, he supported the Polish cause, but his new friends (many of them from Galicia) persuaded him that Ukrainians and Poles did not need independence. To unite around Russia was the only possible salvation for the Slavs in view of the grim threat of German unification. Otherwise, Slavs would not be able to withstand the pressure of Germanism. This was "the first step" in Kel'siev's rapprochement with the motherland, which also meant for him "rapprochement with life."[75] From then on, "each trifle" reinforced his newly found love for Russia. He even broke off his correspondence with Herzen in order to embark freely on this new contemplation.

In 1866, he left Vienna for Galicia, his objective – "to find out the truth about the Poles and, within the limits of the possible, to help Galicians by publishing a book about them."[76] With the lurking hope of presenting this book to the tsar along with an appeal for pardon Kel'siev plunged into work, regularly sent his sketches to the newspaper *Golos* (The Voice), but soon was arrested on suspicion of being a Russian spy and ended up in Moldavia. He decided to spend winter of 1866-67 in Jassy, not far from Galatz, which was to him a constant remainder of the preceding sorrowful winter. During these several months in Jassy, Kel'siev grew restless and was unable to work. He became acquainted with the group of Emasculates, and formed a close relationship with one of them, Konstantin Stepanovich.[77] It was Konstantin Stepanovich, who advised him to return to Russia and drove him to the Russian border.

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[75] Kel'siev, "Ispoved'," p. 403.

Kel'siev was ready not only to repent his old sins and to become a loyal subject, but also to metamorphose into a "fighter for the Russian government." Of course, doubts were creeping into his heart; the shame of being accused of betrayal constantly haunted him. Even though the example of his friend Pafnuty, who had recently joined the official Orthodox Church, was inspiring, Kel'siev had to make his own hard and painful decision. Several times this anguish burst into the pages of his *Confession*, but was always counterbalanced by the author's professed confidence in his mission:

> I, in the old times one of the luminaries and hopes of the young opposition, the most active and courageous of Russian emigrants, will I not be able to sober my comrades and admirers by open exposure of our utopias? ... As Old Believers shuddered when they learned the news about my friend Pafnuty's conversion to

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[76] Ibid., p. 404.
[77] It was not Kel'siev's first encounter with the Emasculates, he also had long discussions with them in Galatz.

the Orthodoxy, the publishers of *The Bell*, nihilists, revolutionaries, and Poles will also shudder upon learning of my return into the bosom of Russian historic life.[78]

This mentioning of "Russian historic life" revealed the most important conclusion, which was drawn by Kel'siev as a result of his trials and tribulations. Sectarians, as well as revolutionaries, created their mythology "by consideration." It did not bother them if their convictions were at odds with Russian history. The Emasculates, for example, had their own dislocated variant of Russian history grounded exclusively on their "consideration." After relating the Emasculates' legends, Kel'siev exclaimed: "Our only consideration is to resolve all problems. Even Robespierre did not revere Reason as much!"[79]

The hope "to return to the bosom of Russian historic life" did not seem groundless. Kel'siev aspired to become useful in the new Russia of reforms. The pages of *Confession* were filled with projects through which Kel'siev would serve the motherland. He offered his services in writing the history of the sectarian movement (p. 334), in training Russian agents for working abroad (p. 341), in winning over the Polish emigration (p. 384), in resettling the Old Believers from Turkey and Hutsuls from Galicia to the Russian lands (p. 393). He also made special recommendations on the "Russification of the Western regions" and on strengthening Russian influence abroad (p. 374-6). Needless to say, none of those projects materialized.

The liberal Russian public did not want to have anything to do with the traitor; the Russian government did not require his services. His initial doubts were growing into despair. The first book, which he published in Russia, a collection of sketches *Galichina i*

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[78] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 411.
[79] V. I. Kelsiev "Sviatorusskie Dvoevery," *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, 1867, Oktiabr', kn. 2, p. 618.

Moldavia, opened with the following tirade: "There is nothing in the world as disgusting and as despicable as a renegade. The word itself is such that it comes as a deadly assault when thrown at someone, who has changed his convictions or his faith."[80]

Whether the time was out of joint, or Kel'siev himself was unable to find his place, his desire "to return to the bosom of Russian historic life," proved to be unrealizable. His book of memoirs *Perezhitoe i peredumannoe* (the title reminiscent of Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*) was met with scorn and mockery. He wrote a historical novel; it went almost unnoticed. Nobody required Kel'siev's services; his extensive knowledge and experience were unclaimed. Gradually, he ruined himself by heavy drinking.

Did the fiasco of his attempts to propagandize Old Believers serve as an admonition to other revolutionaries? Hardly. Notwithstanding Kelsiev's failure and his many warnings, Russian revolutionaries continued to put down "work among sectarians" into their programs. O. V. Aptekman recalled that this provision considered to be almost the most important one in the program of the *Zemlia i Volia* in the 70s.[81] One can find another example of the unfading interest of the revolutionaries in the sectarian world in Plekhanov's memoir about the prominent revolutionary of the 1870s, A. D. Mikhailov, who firmly believed in great opportunities of the work among the *Raskol'niki*. This genius of conspiracy spent almost a year living in one Old Believer family, following all their rituals and studying all-important texts. In several months, he was even able to participate in a dispute with Orthodox priests and then was hired to work as a teacher in one of the *Raskol'niki*'s villages in the Saratov province. He was hopeful, but had to return to St-Petersburg in 1878, because his leadership was crucial for the organization.[82] Kel'siev's assertion that "propaganda will never break through to the Russian *muzhik*"[83] never was discussed by the revolutionaries.

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[80] V. I. Kel'siev *Galichina i Moldavia, putevye pis'ma* (S-Petersburg, 1868): 1.

[81] O. V. Aptekman "Obshchestvo "Zemlia i Volia" semidesiatykh godov," *Revoliutsionery semidesiatykh godov. Vospominaniia uchastnikov narodnicheskogo dvizheniia v Peterburge* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1986): 326.

Shelgunov attested in his memoirs that Kel'siev was unfit for political activity: he was too weak. His public repentance and change of creed repelled Russian revolutionaries. As Shelgunov recalled, "Kel'siev published a booklet, which aroused the indignation of everyone by its sharp transgression from one shore to another, by the cynicism of his repentance and by its improper tone. I do not know where Kel'siev disappeared to afterwards."[84]

Even though Kel'siev diverged from Shchapov in the interpretation of the schism, his "disappearance" was similar to Shchapov's. Sometimes, during the last months of his life, Shchapov came to his acquaintances asking for scraps of food; he was starving. Kel'siev's last days were the same. The similarity does not stop here. Although not a renegade, Shchapov also disagreed with the revolutionary camp. Aristov recounts the story of a meeting of Chernyshevsky and Shchapov, which was organized by the editorial staff of *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary) with the hope of enlisting Shchapov's cooperation. The two men argued so vehemently all evening that it was clear cooperation was out of the question. Shchapov considered the tendency of this journal artificial and useless for the Russian people. His ideal was in the past, in the experience of the local self-government, in the world of the zemstvo's rule. He regarded the strong state, be it a monarchical or a revolutionary one, as an archenemy of that historical Russian Eden. In spirit, this approach was similar to Kel'siev's desire "to return to the bosom of Russian historic life." Shchapov always juxtaposed provincial peasant Russia and the centralized state. Even though he was a respected figure in the revolutionary camp, his ideas were quickly marginalized and largely forgotten.

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[82] G. V. Plekhanov "Vospominanie ob A. D. Mikhailove," *Sochineniia*, t. 1 (Moskva: Gosizdat, 1923): 153-167.

[83] Kel'siev "Ispoved'," p. 378.

[84] N. V. Shelgunov "Vospominaniia," *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, t. 2. 3-e izd. (S-Petersburg, 1904):

Kel'siev did not have any ideas of his own, but his bequest to the future generations of revolutionaries was the experience of his lost life and of lives of his friends and family members; even all this was forgotten. We do not have to wonder whether his "betrayal" or his insignificance was the reason for the oblivion. Following Shchapov, he took Russian popular culture and tradition too seriously. They both were out of tune with the spirit of the time. Both reactionary Russian government and rebellious Russian intelligentsia were acting "by consideration" and sweeping aside history and tradition, if necessary.

CHAPTER THREE: P. I. MEL'NIKOV (ANDREI PECHERSKY)

3.1 Roots and Career

Pavel Ivanovich Mel'nikov, the author of two ever-popular novels, *In the Forests* and *On the Mountains,* published under the name of Andrei Pechersky. These novels opened doors of finest aristocratic reception rooms to their author. Mel'nikov was even introduced to the tsar in 1877 at the ball in the house of Moscow governor-general, prince Dolgorukov. Alexander II praised the novels; Mel'nikov was invited to the best salons to read from his popular books. What did Mel'nikov write about? What was his subject that so thrilled Russian high society? The plots of the novels are simple, even somewhat naive. The novels were even sometimes called 'ethnographic,' because of long descriptions of rites and beliefs, of everything, pertaining to the Russian popular culture. The main personages of the novels are Old Believers.

One could say that after all the restrictions of the previous reign this kind of reading was fascinating as a forbidden fruit. But these novels were in high demand long after their first publication. According to one study published in 1988, by that year the novels had gone through 14 editions (counting only separate editions, without collections of works) with two and a half million copies,[1] a real popular reading. What caused this explosion of interest in the 1870s and what kept the books afloat later are not important for us. Whether it was a general interest in Russian popular culture or fascination with the Old Belief, the outcome is important. As a result, images of the Old Believers became an integral part of Russian self-consciousness. The constant popularity of the books shows that from the 1870s onward Russian public was continuously introduced to the forgotten ancient superstitions and minutest details of Old Believer rituals. Who was this author who studied and described those rituals and beliefs so scrupulously? How did he acquire his extensive knowledge? What kind of message did he intend to unveil with this, more than 2000-page, narrative?

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[1] L. A. Annensky *Tri eretika* (Moskva: "Kniga," 1988): 194-5. The author notes for a comparison that Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* is quite close with twelve editions.

In order to answer these questions, one should begin by studying Mel'nikov's career as well as his intellectual roots against the background of discussions concerning the schism and the whole "atmosphere" of the 1870s, when the first of his novels appeared. To develop a similar kind of characteristic for the 1860s seemed quite a hopeless task. The sixties, according to the memoirs of N. I. Sveshnikov, a street bookseller, were not only the time of various reforms and reorganizations, but also a time of peculiar animation and anticipation of something new. In his slightly cynical view, "demands for books were growing periodically: at one time scientific works were in great request, after that – juridical, medical, sociological books were sought after. However bad were these books on a fashionable subject, they were sold out at a high price."[2]

Obviously, Old Belief happened to be one of those 'fashionable subjects', if it ever was such a subject at all. G. P. Fedotov, one of the most sensitive explorers of Russian spirituality stressed an important feature of the sixties: deafness to historical ideas. "Men of the sixties readily substitute ethnography for history", he asserted.[3] It seemed necessary to put aside all those first works written during the bustling period immediately after the Great Reforms. That is why the 1870s and especially the 1880s are the main focus of our attention: the years when the Old Believers had already been introduced to the Russian society and even made their way into the literary pages. But first, why and how did P. I. Mel'nikov take a fancy to the Old Belief?

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[2] N. I. Sveshnikov *Vospominaniia propashchego cheloveka* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996): 77.

[3] G. P. Fedotov "Rossiia Kliuchevskogo", in *Sud'ba i grekhi Rossii (Izbrannye stat'i po filosofii russkoi istorii i kul'tury): v 2-kh tomakh,* t. 1 (S.-Peterburg: Sofiia, 1991): 330.

Prior to writing the novels P. I. Mel'nikov worked as an official in the Ministry of the Interior for about a quarter of a century, specializing in the matters of Old Belief and sectarianism. During the last years of Nicholas' I reign he carried out special secret commissions of the Ministry proving the exact numbers of the *Raskolniki* and nature of their beliefs. As a result, an extensive secret report "On the modern state of the schism in Nizhegorodskaia province" was presented to the government in 1853. Mel'nikov took an active part in the destruction of Old Believers' monasteries (*skity*) on the river Kerzhenets. "It was there," ironically recorded one of the contemporaries, "that he started his 'studies' of the schism in the form of investigations and inquiries."[4]

This remark was not accurate. In fact, Mel'nikov started his studies of the schism much earlier. It was during his childhood that he first encountered *Raskol'niki*. All the peasants of his mother's estate, Kazantsevo in Nizhegorodskaia province belonged to the Priestist denomination of the Old Belief. There, in the forests of his native land, the most famous Old Believer monasteries grew for more than a century. In the early 1840s, working as a teacher of history and statistics in a gymnasium in Nizhny Novgorod, Mel'nikov got acquainted with the most influential local *Raskol'niki*, who usually came for the Nizhegorodskaia fair. He became especially good friends with those who were selling books and manuscripts. A poor teacher, he could not afford to buy those books but was often allowed to borrow them for reading.

In 1841, when M. N. Pogodin, professor of Russian history at the Moscow university and a passionate collector of ancient Russian manuscripts, visited Novgorod, Mel'nikov accompanied him in his trips to the fair, to local historic sites and to the stores of Old Believer book merchants. Upon his departure, Pogodin entrusted Mel'nikov with the task of buying "rarities" for his famous collection. For four years Mel'nikov was sending manuscripts, books, and icons to Moscow, to Pogodin. His knowledge of Russian history in general and Raskol in particular was constantly increasing due to extensive reading and numerous personal connections with Old Believers.

A keen student of the local lore, in 1845 Mel'nikov became an editor of the unofficial part of the *Provinicial Gazette* (Gubernskie vedomosti) where he published many articles devoted to local history, ethnography, and statistics. In 1846, he left his job in the gymnasium and combined editorship with another work: he became an official on special commissions under the provincial military governor. Mel'nikov emphasized in his autobiography that this position allowed him to come nearer to the simple people. But even then, during the first years of his service, his activities were shrouded in mystery. He describes only one of those missions in his autobiography:

> In 1847, when cholera appeared in Astrakhan', it was followed by the royal order to examine all people sailing up the river Volga for the Nizhegorodskaia fair, but the aim of this examination was to be kept in secret in order not to excite apprehension of cholera at the fair. Such apprehension would have harmed the fair's successful completion. This "secret quarantine" was under the command of P. I. Mel'nikov, who on this occasion spent more than a month with barge haulers passing from barge to barge at the Checherskaia guardship.[5]

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[4] P. D. Boborykin *Vospominaniia v dvukh tomakh,* t. 1 (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1965): 62.

[5] P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pechersky) "Avtobiografiia," *Sobranie sochinenii v 6-ti tomakh,* t.1 (Moskva: "Pravda," 1963): 321.

In his autobiography Mel'nikov skips minute details of his official duties paying more attention to unofficial activities. He edited *Provincial Gazette*, managed the provincial statistical committee and the rural exhibition, and sorted out archives of local offices and monasteries. At the governor's request, Mel'nikov usually accompanied all distinguished visitors of the province in their journeys to historic sites. In 1850, for instance, he escorted two royal princes, Nikolai and Mikhail Nikolaevichi. It was Nikolai who, enchanted by Mel'nikov's stories, suggested that their chaperone should write a novel. But in those years Mel'nikov was an effective and intelligent official, an enthusiast of the local lore, not a fiction writer. After publishing several unsuccessful stories in the early 1840s he decided to stop writing and not to resume until he had learned more about the life of the simple people

His situation changed in 1849 with the arrival in Nizhny Novgorod of another writer-cum-official, Vladimir Ivanovich Dal' (1801 – 1872). Here we have to interrupt the story of Mel'nikov's studies in order to speak about Dal'. The influence of Dal' on Mel'nikov and Leskov was so important that we cannot disregard this figure. Although born into a Danish-German family and educated as naval officer and medical doctor, Dal' is a celebrated figure in Russian literature. For many years he collected words, expressions, and proverbs for his most fundamental, enormous work, *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*.[6] Nobody knew dialects of Russian provinces better than Vladimir Ivanovich, who after a two-minute talk with a peasant was able to guess not only the province but even the district of his origin. Dal' also published collections of Russian folktales and proverbs; there were 37,000 proverbs in his collection.

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[6] It was Dal' who treated Pushkin after the fatal duel in 1837. According to Mel'nikov, the dying Pushkin put his talisman, a ring with emerald stone on the hand of Dal', "on that same hand which wrote the *Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language.*" (P. I. Mel'nikov "Vladimir Ivanovich Dal'. Kritiko-bibliograficheskii ocherk," in Dal', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, t. 1 (SPb – M, 1897): XXXVII-XXXVIII).

For several years, almost every evening Mel'nikov helped Dal' in his work on the dictionary; together they studied Russian chronicles and hagiography in order to understand and explain local words and expressions. Dal' persuaded his younger friend to resume writing. With Dal's advice and a lucky touch, a new writer with strong interest in the Old Belief was born – Andrei Petrovich Pechersky. This pseudonym was suggested by Dal': *Pecherskaia* was the name of the street where they both lived. As an older friend, Dal' was also able to help Mel'nikov to advance in his career.

On May 19 1850, L. A. Perovsky, Minister of the Internal Affairs, attached Mel'nikov to the ministry without any request from the latter. In Nizhny Novgorod, Dal's official position was head of the Office for the Administration of Crown Properties. In the 1840s he worked in Saint Petersburg under Perovsky at the Ministry of Crown Properties. When Dal' was sent to Nizhny Novgorod and Perovsky became Minister of the Internal Affairs, the old connection was not broken. Perovsky held Dal' in the highest esteem and considered him an irreplaceable associate and close friend. No wonder, Mel'nikov got the position without any request on his part.

Actually, Mel'nikov was one of a whole cohort of "literati" who joined the staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs while Perovsky was at the helm. Such writers as I. S. Turgenev, V. A. Sologub, I. S. Aksakov, Iu. F. Samarin, A. K. Tolstoy, M. N. Longinov, as well as professors, archeologists, and statisticians were employed by the Ministry. Perovsky petitioned the tsar for the return of Nadezhdin from his exile. Mel'nikov reports that Dal' and Nadezhdin "conducted the most important affairs under the personal supervision of the Minister, and conducted them very often without any knowledge of appropriate departments."[7]

Dal' himself was a specialist in the Old Belief, sectarianism and popular culture. In the first chapter we mentioned Nadezhdin's *Investigation on the Heresy of the Emasculates* (1845). In fact, Nadezhdin used Dal's work on this subject. In 1844, Dal' wrote a report on the Emasculates. Perovsky presented it to the tsar who was very pleased with the document and inquired about the name of the author. When it turned out that the author was a Lutheran, the tsar considered it inappropriate to send to the highest officials a book on a religious subject written by an adherent of a different creed. So Nadezhdin got a commission to write a new work of research and he used Dal's work extensively.[8]

Even though there were other well-educated young men from the provinces who were also appointed to the Ministry during those years, still, Mel'nikov's career move was probably the most spectacular one. He did not simply join the Ministry, he entered a very special circle of men close to the Minister. He received personal secret assignments directly from Perovsky. In 1852, for example, he was appointed head of the statistical expedition in Nizhegorodskaia province. In addition he was to estimate real numbers of the *Raskol'niki* and to investigate most important cases concerning them. He was to address all problems and questions directly and secretly to Dal' without notifying local administration. Mel'nikov was successful in his new station. He ardently closed monasteries, took away precious ancient icons, and denounced his old acquaintances from whom he used to borrow books.[9] Indeed, he was on the state service and his point of view must have always coincided with the official one.

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[7] Mel'nikov "Vladimir Ivanovich Dal'," pp. LII-LIII.
[8] Ibid., p. LIV-LV.

It seems that the atmosphere of secrecy, which surrounded all official discussions of the schism during the years of strict Nikolaevan regime, moulded both Dal' and Mel'nikov. When Mel'nikov wrote a biographical sketch as an introduction to the complete collection of Dal's works, he especially praised Dal' for his discretion – a strange feature to emphasize when one writer portrays another. Thus, Dal' was one of the best official experts on the schism in Russia and he was also a popular writer who had a few images of Old Believers in his stories. Mel'nikov always stressed the fact that he was Dal's disciple. It is clear that the only way to appreciate the peculiarity of Mel'nikov's approach to the Old Belief is to begin by analyzing the works of his mentor. Although Dal' accumulated large numbers of documents concerning the schism,[10] Old Believers appeared on the pages of his works quite rarely.

Dal' wrote only two stories, in which the main personages were Old Believers. But in both cases their adherence to the schism was mentioned in an off-hand manner; it was somewhat hidden in the middle of the story. The first one, *The Ural Cossack*, was published in 1842. It has all the appearance of a calm, dispassionate ethnographic observation: it contains a detailed account of the life of a Ural Cossack. Only the family name of the Cossack has a hint of an appraisal: Prokliatov (the cursed one). Prokliatov is always busy fishing, hunting, or fighting. His religious beliefs seem to be just a peripheral component of his existence. It is his wife who is greatly concerned with the strict observation of all rituals, while Prokliatov has to ensure the survival of the family. We learn what he wears in winter, why he prefers a rifle to a sabre, what he eats at home and in the field, and how he pronounces words. The facts concerning his creed are interspersed with this everyday-life information; the background of his religious beliefs is implied rather than stated. Here is the example, where Prokliatov's attitude to his beard is explained:

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[9] The authorities were scared by the rise of activity among the Old Believers. The *skity* (Old Believer monasteries usually hidden in the forests) as centers of any activities were considered the main enemies of the regime. In May 1853, when the expulsion from the *skity* started, there were 16 *skity* with 49 cloisters. 976 people, mostly women lived there. In a short time 741 people were evicted, 358 buildings – destroyed. In 1854, there were only 8 *skity* with 201 inhabitants left. Mel'nikov was one of those who arranged this successful operation. (See: N. V. Varadinov *Istoriia Ministerstva Vnutrennikh del,* t. 8 (Moskva, 1863): 644-5.

> His beard is dearer to him than his head; *in this respect he is a real Turk*; but sending his son to the outward service, to Moscow he shaved his beard having ordered to grow it again upon return and consoled himself and the son in this misfortune by saying that mothers will pray for the forgiveness of this sin.[11]

This passage clearly shows that Dal' does not associate Old Belief with Russianness. Probably, this kind of association did not exist yet in the Russian discourse. Dal' mentions the old Russian custom of growing a beard, the one prohibited by Peter the Great and defiantly observed by the *Raskol'niki*. At the same time, Prokliatov is called "a real Turk" because he holds his beard so dear. Thereby, instead of reminding about traditional values, the allusion to this custom serves well to destroy any thought of its connection with traditional Russian culture.

Dal' is certainly aware of this connection. He even refers to it when it is safe to do so. He begins a story about Romanian boyars, for example, with a warning against dangers of thoughtless imitation of foreign customs and of neglect of traditional ones:

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[10] All his materials Dal' bequeathed to Mel'nikov.

[11] V. I. Dal' "Ural'skii kazak," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, t. 7 (St-Petersburg-Moskva: Izdanie tovarishchestva M. O. Vol'f, 1897): 174. The italics are mine.

> If it is true that a beard is like grass and one can mow it without any harm to a head, there are so many things that should not be mowed, but still, they are so often mowed together with the beard. It is well known from experience that hasty imitation of foreign morals and manners and, together with this, inevitable abysmal scorn of one's own every-day life, always entails corruption of morals...[12]

Writing about Romanian high society, Dal' identifies growing a beard with traditional values; writing about Old Believers, he identifies it with some alien nationality. To be "a real Turk," a Muslim, is the strongest juxtaposition to being Russian, but it is used as a figure of speech, jokingly. This way, Prokliatov's traditional, cherished beard is turned into yet another unimportant ethnographic detail, one of so many others.

Analyzing Dal''s work, one scholar paid attention to the indefiniteness of his approach to genres: elements of an anecdote and of ethnographic sketch are often present in the same story.[13] One can certainly see this in "The Ural Cossack," which is rich in descriptions of everyday life, but ends as a tale, an anecdote. After 34 years of service, Prokliatov decides to retire. He only needs to go on one last campaign. The story ends with the pictures of joyous return of the Cossack troops. Prokliatov's wife also runs to the marching Cossacks asking about her husband. "Behind, mother, he is behind," they say, until the last one passes and she realizes that he will never come back. So, in this story we have a very long ethnographic sketch with an anecdotal ending. In another story, "Beglianka" (The Fugitive), the depiction of tableware in an Old Believer's house in Turkey serves as a prelude to a tale of fraud and murder. At the end, a master of the house, a seemingly pious Old Believer turns out to be a murderer. Now the story appears to be anecdotal, with some ethnographic details, adherence of the murderer to the Old Belief being one of them.

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[12] V. I. Dal' "Chetyre braka i odin razvod," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* t. 4, p. 69.

[13] J. T. Baer *Vladimir Ivanovic Dal' as a Belletrist* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1972): 176-7.

Apparently, Dal' was not concerned with the clarity of genres. He also did not belong to any ideological camp. The purpose of all Dal's major works was the same: to introduce his fellow-countrymen "to the wealth of the Russian language in its uncorrupted form." The most important task for him was to be truthful in the depiction of popular rites, beliefs, and dialects. J. T. Baer wrote a book on Dal', in which he noted: "By far the most outstanding device in Dal's artistic work is his language."[14] This scholar investigates Dal''s interest in the language of simple Russians, his "linguistic reformist ambition." All this brings Baer to the following strong conclusion: "One must not try to find ideas in Dal''s work."[15]

Was Dal' just an unsophisticated observer of popular culture? I. S. Turgenev also wrote that nobody in Russian literature could be compared with Dal' in "empathy with the people," and in his "naive and good-natured keenness of observation."[16] These assessments raise a lot of questions. How could it be that this shrewd politician and accomplished official was just a naive observer in his literary work? Maybe it was a natural outcome of his caution formed by the years of government service that was later praised so much by his disciple P. I. Mel'nikov. Or maybe this constant lowering of the tone is in itself a consequence of a certain set of ideas. Both assumptions seem feasible. It follows from both of them that V. I. Dal' was consciously avoiding ideas and strong opinions in his work. That is why "dangerous" images of Old Believers never stand out in his tales. Even in a story "Dedushka Bugrov" (Grandfather Bugrov)[17] written in the more liberal 1860s, the protagonist's adherence to the schism is somewhat hidden. It is mentioned for the first time only in the second half of the story. Could it be that even under the more tolerant regime the best Russian specialist in the schism was determined to keep his discretion?

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[14] Baer *Vladimir Ivanovic Dal'*, p. 177.

[15] Ibid., p. 180.

[16] I. S. Turgenev "Povesti, skazki, i rasskazy kazaka Luganskago," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, t. 1 (Moskva-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1960): 299.

If we were to summarize our commentary on Dal''s participation in Russian discourse concerning the schism, it would be safe to say that this participation was brought to nothing by this author's caution. It is hard to agree that there are no ideas in his work. Of course, one can find ideas there. Yet sometimes his discretion was more important for Dal' than his ideas. His fingers were burned more than once. He was arrested for a book of fairy-tales in 1832. In 1848, prior to his arrival in Nizhny Novgorod, he received a reprimand from Perovsky for a phrase in one of his stories. The minister "gave him a choice either to write and not to stay in office or to stay in office and not to write."[18]

As an official, Dal' simply could not allow himself to express strong opinions. As a wise man, he learned not to thrust his ideas on anyone. He wrote ironically about one of his heroes: "a restless man, he hangs round like a wasp with his truth."[19] So Dal''s "truth" is not imposed on a reader. It is expressed indirectly through a parable, a hint, or a joke. Let us demonstrate this with one example. Another story of this later period, "Obmiranie" (Fainting) begins in a lofty style: "The future fortunes of Russia are impenetrable, its mainland stretches far away, and one language, one speech, one popular spirit embrace a lot of space." But this tone is almost immediately lowered when a narrator drives into a small town and sees how "a frisky goat ... cautiously threads her way uphill, herself not knowing for what; probably, as an Englishman, in order to go there where no one has gone before."[20] This brave goat appears soon after a reminder that the Russian people has a hope, it is blessed, and "it is not forsaken by God's Providence." Here Dal's idea of a special Russian destiny is reaffirmed indirectly through a tension between the poetic beginning and a mocking figure of the "frisky goat" that behaves like an Englishman.

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[17] Petr Egorych Bugrov was a famous Old Believer in Nizhny Novgorod in the 1840s and 1850s. He also became a prototype of the main hero of Mel'nikov's novel *In the Forests,* Patap Maksimych Chapurin.
[18] Quoted in: Baer, *Vladimir Ivanovic Dal'*, p. 147.
[19] Dal' "Samorodok," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, t. VIII, p. 8.

It was only once, in the late 1860s, that Dal' explained his approach to the schism in one of his stories, not in official document. His assessment of the Old Belief may be expressed in one word: dullness. The rites themselves are important; their function is to represent spiritual and moral truths. But the dull habit of following the rites supplants thoughts and feelings. This spiritual delusion is the origin of the schism:

> A man seeks the truth and always wanders: his mind wanders if he gives it unrestrained freedom, his will and heart wander if he surrenders himself wholly to a passion; he wanders and grows dull becoming attached only to appearance, only to the rites of the faith, he wanders and raves flinging himself into a different extreme, into the abstract sphere of the spiritual world...[21]

Dal' states here that the world of religious dissent oscillates between the two extremes: Old Belief as dullness and sectarianism as delirium, between stupidity and craziness. Old Believers themselves could be kind and decent people, "but their orientation on the rites only gives them some foolhardy dullness, obstinacy, and intolerance."[22] This position is entirely negative but it does not exactly coincide with the official one that saw dissenters as potential back-stabbers. Remember Nadezhdin's verdict: since simple people are unable to distinguish between civil and religious duties, "the slightest betrayal of the Orthodoxy inevitably entails betrayal of Orthodox Russia." Even if the government was more tolerant in the 1860s, the apprehensions were still there. Dal' feels sorry for the *Raskol'niki*, but his attitude to them is entirely negative. In this sense, he is close to officialdom. There is not a trace of that sympathetic interest in the Old Believers that had been growing in society since the appearance of Shchapov's works.

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[20] Dal' "Obmiranie," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* t. VIII, p. 273.
[21] Dal' "Oktiabr'," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* t.VIII, p. 297.

At about the same time, in 1869 another former official, A. F. Pisemsky, published his novel *Liudi sorokovykh godov* (Men of the Forties). The novel contains a lot of autobiographical elements. Having graduated from Moscow University in 1848, Pisemsky had to return to his native province of Kostroma to tend to his family estate. There he started his government service; there he also participated in the destruction of *Raskol'niki*'s chapels.

Vikhrov, the protagonist of this novel, is convinced that to study the schism is the only way to learn anything about the Russian people. He calls the schism an "enormous and poetic cause of Russian popular life" and ... goes to destroy Old Believers' chapel. He consoles himself by saying that he is just an executor, he did not make any decisions, and he is the man who will do it "tenderly." Indeed, he allows the Raskoniki to hold the last service in the chapel and he looks through his fingers at some women who hide the most precious icons. When the scene of destruction becomes too heart breaking for him to watch, he enters into his room and writes a letter to the woman he loves. He is trying to explain to her why "the authorities" sent him to implement this frightening decision:

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[22] Ibid.

> All, madam, is done for the benefit of the state, – so that everything would be flat, even, and monotonous; they [the authorities – E. K.] do not know that only uneven mountains, diverse forests, winding rivers give beauty to the land and defend the country from an enemy better than any fortresses.... What is Raskol in Russia? Is it a political party? No. A religious conviction? No. A sect hiding some vicious passions? No. What is it? It is not up to much, it is only a disposition of the Russian heart and mind, it is our own understanding of Christianity, which was not learned from the Greeks. It is so dear to me because it is all ours in its entirety, it is not taken from anyone that is why it is so diverse.[23]

Vikhrov stops writing and goes out to continue his supervision of the destruction. Now the peasants are trying to pull down the bell, weeping and screaming are getting louder. About five thousand people will be left without a chapel. A reader is not familiar with those weeping Old Believers, he does not know any names of people in the crowd. Everything is seen through Vikhrov's eyes, only his thoughts and feelings seem to be important in this scene. When the bell is landed safely and the destruction continues, Vikhrov returns to his letter and asks his next question: "What is the Russian people?"[24]

The destruction of the chapel is just one episode in a long-winded novel. Besides Vikhrov's life and love stories it contains his views on almost anything considered important in the 1840s. Pisemsky is not writing about Old Believers, he simply lets his reader know how the blossom of the intelligentsia of the 1840s perceived this problem.

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[23] A. F. Pisemsky *Sobranie Sochinenii v 9-ti tomakh*, t. 5 (Moskva: "Pravda," 1959): 249-50.
[24] Ibid., p. 252.

His task in this novel is to show that "men of the 1840s" prepared the reforms of the 1860s. The case of the schism is just one example. We cannot assert anything about the 1840s; it is hard to believe that Pisemsky could think about the Old Belief in such explicit terms in those years. The idea itself did not exist yet, while in the late 1860s it was in the air. In the late 1860s, when the novel was written, Pisemsky expressed the opinion of many when he wrote that Old Believers were more Russian than anyone else.

There were several historians who continued the study of the schism in the spirit of Shchapov's dissertation. N. Ia. Aristov, who would later write Shchapov's biography, insisted that Old Believers were the keepers of Russian traditional life; the details were of vital importance for them. For this author, to ask why the *Raskol'niki* were so attached to the petty details of the past life and rituals is the same as to ask why Russian popular pictures are not drawn in a French manner. In olden times life was wholesome, all trifles were parts and expressions of some sacred order of things. "It is only through these trifles that the Russian man could explain what he wanted and what went against him: he was never fond of abstractions."[25] This article was published in 1862. Even though the author looks at the schism with admiration, he does not make the step, which is made by Pisemsky's hero: he does not identify Old Belief with Russianness. Clearly, this vision started to develop only several years later when a formerly self-confident society was in a painful search for a new cultural mythology.

One can see signs of this anxiety in another famous work published in 1869, N. Ia. Danilevsky's *Rossiia i Evropa* [Russia and Europe]. The appraisals of this book differ widely, from "hardly original"[26] to "a literary landmark."[27] Linda Gerstein argues that it was N. Strakhov who not only helped the author to publish *Russia and Europe*, but also created the image of this work. Both, the first publication in a journal (1869) and the first separate edition were hardly noticed. Strakhov, who was an executor of Danilevsky's papers after the latter's death, brought about a new edition of it in 1888. It was Strakhov's vivid polemics with the famous philosopher Vladimir Soloviev about the book that gave it the *succes du scandale*. This edition was sold in a few months. Maybe, another explanation is possible: in the late sixties – early seventies the volume fell on deaf ears, because Russian society was not ready yet to absorb its ideas. What were those thoughts that were brewing in Russia at that time but became popular only in the late 1880s?

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[25] N. Ia. Aristov "Po povodu novykh izdanii o raskole," *Vremia*, 1862, vol. 2, p. 89.
[26] L. Gerstein *Nikolai Strakhov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971): 107.

N. Ia. Danilevsky (1822-1885) worked out a theory of cultural historical types similar to the ones developed later by O. Spengler and A. Toynbee. The main goal of the book was to demonstrate the incompatibility of the Slavic cultural world with other – particularly Western European – cultural types. The first two chapters examined various conflicts between Russia and Europe. The conclusion of that survey was simple: Europe always was and always will be hostile to Russia. Some historical instinct makes European states hate Russia. In contrast, Russian leaders see Russia as a part of Europe and pursue European interests. Everyone should finally understand that Russia and Europe are alien to each other, because they belong to different civilizations or cultural historical types.

In order to prove the originality and self-sufficiency of the nascent Slavic civilization, Danilevsky undertook a long journey into the details of contemporary politics, philosophy of history, and philosophy of science. As a result, the idea of Europe as the culmination of progress seemed parochial, while the distinctiveness of the Russian

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[27] A. Vucinich *Darwin in Russian Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988): 121.

civilization was reaffirmed. The author investigated the peculiarities of Russian "psychic structure," "confession," "course of historical education."[28] These were two trends of thoughts that appeared in the book but became popular only in the 1880s: the alienation of Europe and the uniqueness of Russia. At first, it might seem like returning to the old Slavophiles-Westernizers paradigm. But it was shown by many historians that Slavophiles as well as Westernizers always looked up to Europe. Danilevsky wanted to burst of this circle, not to glance back to Europe anymore, but rather to study unique features of Russian culture. It is revealing that Danilevsky poses these problems in 1869 and in the very same year a very sensitive writer, Pisemsky, strikes at the root of the problem of Russian uniqueness by identifying it with the Old Belief. Even though Danilevsky's book was not a subject of vivid discussions in the 1870s, it was important for us to note that those ideas emerged at that time, or even earlier. From the very beginning, the attention to the Old Belief in the search for Russian peculiarity went hand in hand with the rift with Europe. But such a position would be systematized only in the 1880s. Until then, scholars continued to look for the true meaning of the schism.

In 1870, another historian, V. V. Andreev published a book *Raskol i ego znachenie v narodnoi russkoi istorii* (The schism and its meaning in popular Russian history). First of all, he asserted that *Raskol'niki* were the most sober, hard-working, and literate part of the Russian peasantry. For him, the heart of the problem was in explaining why the *Raskol'niki* broke away from the rest of the country. He refused to believe that some minor deviations from dogma and ritual could so forcefully split the Russian people. Peculiarities in church rites always existed in various Russian regions. The strengthening of the autocracy required homogeneity and order, so local peculiarities turned into deviations from the norm. The final unification of Russia was at odds with local customs, especially in the North. The leaders of the schism used religious slogans because they were the most familiar ones:

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[28] N. Ia. Danilevsky *Rossiia i Evropa* ([1894], New York: Johnson Reprints, 1966). See chapters VIII through X.

> As a resistance to innovations, raskol would be incomprehensible if studied in the religious sphere only. Indeed, Russian raskol appeared in equal measure in all the spheres of people's everyday life. Innovations, especially if they were not introduced gradually but abruptly and unexpectedly, met with a repulse. This repulse was characteristic for the indigenous Russian part of *zemstvo*, that part which rebuffed Mongolian rule and eastern customs and later was ready to give the same repulse to the western innovations. This part of the population treasured everything Russian, whatever it was… Nobility was mostly of foreign origin and alien to this milieu… that consisted mostly of the merchants and peasants.[29]

To sum up Andreev's position: the essence of the schism was neither religious, nor political. The key for solving the mystery of the schism lay in one magic word – zemstvo. The schism was a regional struggle against the leveling forms of state unification. There were as many grounds for the split as there were regions in Russia. "Raskol was the manifestation of the popular local opposition."[30] The decision proposed in Pisemsky's novel seems so simple and beautiful. If Old Belief equals Old Russia, the search for fundamental cultural principles should be over. If Old Belief is "a disposition of the Russian heart and mind," one should just follow the disposition. But in Andreev's concept this simple solution breaks into so many fragments: There are so many localities in Russia, there is no one schism, there are a lot of denominations. Does it mean that the spirit of Old Russia cannot be found and defined?

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[29] V. V. Andreev *Raskol i ego znachenie v narodnoi russkoi istorii* (SPb., 1870): 76-77.
[30] Ibid., p. 155.

There was yet another opportunity to define it – as an exact antithesis of the Old Belief. Popular historian N. I. Kostomarov wrote in 1871 that the schism" was an important phenomenon in people's mental progress." It "stirred up the dreaming mind of the Russian man".[31] The title of Kostomarov's article was very simple "Istoriia raskola u raskol'nikov" (The history of the schism [written] by the *Raskol'niki*), the subject was quite innocent: a digest of the history of schism written by an Old Believer[32]. But the scholar supplies this article with an extensive, full of paradoxes, stimulating historical introduction, which really 'stirred up' the minds and made many people take a new look at the aged problem of the Russian schism.

First, Kostomarov sweeps aside predominant opinion about the congruency of the Raskol and Old Russia. In age-old Russia, commoners were indifferent and even cold towards religion. So, Old Believers' zeal, their devotion to their grandfathers' rituals marked their break with Old Russia. "The schism is a new phenomenon, alien to the Old Russia", he concluded.[33] Other links in this chain of paradoxes are the following. Old Belief in itself was feeble but very frightening, because it could easily 'stick' to any popular unrest. The schism embodied people's attempts to break away from darkness and mental stillness; it was an organ of popular self-education. But at the present moment, enlightenment was the only means to eradicate the schism. Kostomarov's captivating rhetoric pulled the schism out of the newly prepared pedestal. Suddenly, it was not that old and it was not Russian.[34]

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[31] N. I. Kostomarov "Istoriia raskola u raskol'nikov", Sobranie sochinenii, kn. 5, t. XII (SPb: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1903): 212. First published in: *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 4 (1871).

[32] Pavel Liubopytnyi *Khronologicheskoe iadro staroobriadcheskoi tserkvi, ob'iasniaiushchee vse otlichnyia ikh deianiia s˘1650-1819 g.* [manuscript]

While these theoretical discussions about the Raskol proceeded, the Russian Orthodox Church was becoming weaker day by day. In his insightful book about the situation with the parish clergy during the time of reforms, Gregory L. Freeze demonstrated that "the church suffered a steady attrition of resources and power, even as it faced mounting challenges on all sides – unbelief among Westernized elites, Old Belief among commoners, other belief among minorities, or new belief among sectarians."[35] As a result of the Great Reforms, many parish priests lost part of their meager income, since a lot of landlords who traditionally supported the priests left their estates after emancipation was granted to their peasants. To the great horror of many clerics, the problems of the church were now openly discussed in the press. Freeze characterizes the psychological state of many priests as "a sense of acute anxiety."

One can see the reflection of this deterioration in one of Leskov's books, when the hero returns to the place where he spent his childhood and goes to visit the local priest. He sharply hints about the situation of a parish priest in the past, by recalling the late previous priest, whom his uncle, "prince Odolensky made to bury his wolfhounds and to serve to the golden calf." But the new priest surprises him by saying that now the situation is much worse. Previously, landlords would help with hay and bread, would send peasants for assistance in harvesting time. "Now people have grown cold to us." To

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[33] Kostomarov, "Istoriia raskola," p. 232.

[34] This view will be developed in the twentieth century in the works of prominent Russian theologians, A. V. Kartashev and G. V. Florovsky.

[35] G. L. Freeze *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983): xxvi.

the objection that it is in his power to revive the warmth to religion in people, he answers: "No, what a revival! Previously, when people suffered under serfdom, they were constantly in need and in grief and resorted to God in their misfortunes; but now... a man comes to the church only if he wants."[36]

For the clergy, the schism presented a real and pressing danger, not a subject for scholarly discussions. That is why in official church actions, the rules of reason often gave way to the logic of a fistfight. Granted, there were no systematic persecutions as in the 1830s and 1840s, but there was still a "hunt" for Old Believer priests and bishops. It is enough to recall the story of the imprisonment of the Old Believer archbishop Arkady Slavskii, bishop Alimpy, and bishop Konon Novozybkovsky. Arkady and Alimpy were arrested in 1854 during the Crimean War, Konon – in 1858; they were kept in the Suzdal' Spaso-Efimiev monastery for more than twenty years. Even though the reign of Alexander II is considered a tolerant one, both Arkady and Konon were discharged only in 1881 by the decree of Alexander III.[37] When Konon was arrested and sent to the monastery, Alexander II ordered to persuade him with "meek admonitions." This specification, that admonitions should necessarily be 'meek' was the only difference with the "strict" epoch of Nicholas I.[38]

Even though the Church was fighting with a strong adversary, it was not ready to plunge into open public discussions of this struggle. The long-standing methods of suppressing the information, of pretending that Old Believers constitute just a negligible minority still seemed the best. But seeds of dissent appeared even inside the church. G. L. Freeze relates the following episode, widely known in the seventies. A provincial priest, I. S. Belliustin published two articles on the Old Belief in which he "depicted the Church and Old Belief as two "parties," both the victims of a blind, ritualistic Byzantinism."[39] A lengthy investigation of this case "nearly ended in Belliustin's defrocking." The church had more and more grounds for worrying; the weakening of the position of local clergy was one of them. The strengthening of religious dissent and constant attempts to establish connections between the revolutionary camp and the dissenters were the other important grounds.

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[36] N. S. Leskov "Smekh i gore," *Sobranie sochinenii v 11-ti tomakh*, t. 3 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1957): 471

[37] A. Pankratov "O zhizni i stradaniiakh arkhiepiskopa Arkadya Slavskogo i episkopa Konona Novozybkovskogo, ispovednikov suzdal'skikh," *Ot vostoka napravo. Istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennye voprosy staroobriadchestva* (Moskva, 2000): 55-60.

[38] A. S. Prugavin *Staroobriadcheskie arkhierei v Suzdal'skoi kreposti* (SPb., 1903): 18. The addition of just one word was not that important. We know that Arkady and Alimpy were kept in solitary confinement, in

According to many assessments, after the turbulent sixties, the number of Old Believers and sectarians started to grow. G. V. Florovsky characterized the 1870s as the time of "acute religious-moralistic agitation, both in the upper and in the lower strata."[40] According to Florovsky, the search for the truth and "apocalyptic anxiety" were important motives of the public mood. He even identified the populist "going to the people" movement as an outbreak of this excitement. Stundism was spreading in the South of Russia; Radstockism, or Pashkovite movement – was blossoming in the highest circles of St-Petersburg.[41] Pashkovites, Russian princes and nobles were visiting prisons to read the Bible to convicts. They started to make connections with Dukhobory (Spirit-

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cold and wet cellars. As a result, Alimpy died in 1859. This measure of 'admonition' was also used for Konon. Both he and Arkady could hardly walk when they were discharged.

[39] Freeze *The Parish Clergy*, 394.

[40] G. V. Florovsky *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1983): 401.

[41] N. S. Leskov called the Pashkovite movement "the high-society schism" (*velikosvetskii raskol*). Members of the circle were Colonel of the Guard V. A. Pashkov, who was a close friend of Alexander II and a member of one of the oldest and wealthiest families in Russia, baron M. M. Korf, Lord Chamberlain of the Emperor, count A. A. Bobrinskii, Colonel of the Corps of Nobles and Minister of Transportation, E. I. Chertkova, the wife the Adjutant-General to the Tsar (mother of V. G. Chertkov, one of L. Tolstoy's closest associates), princess M. M. Dondukova-Korsakova, F. G. Terner and many others. (See: G. H. Ellis

Wrestlers) and other sects. As a result, the Pashkovite movement was prohibited and its main activists had to leave Russia in 1884. Both the Church and the state agonized over these disturbing developments.

3.2 *In the Forests*: an Ethnographic Sketch or a National Epic?

It was during those unsettled years that Mel'nikov started to publish his slow-moving narrative. *In the Forests* was appearing in installments in Katkov's journal *Russkii Vestnik* for four years, from 1871 to 1874.[42] Whereas previously Mel'nikov was the main specialist on the subject of the schism in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, now he became the principal authority on this subject in the world of Russian literature, in the eyes of the Russian public. That is why to study his approach to the *Raskol* is especially important for us. His novels set the pattern for dealing with the images of *Raskol'niki*. What a contrast to the passionate invectives of professor Shchapov! From the very first page we find ourselves in a mysterious land where time seems to come to a standstill. Here, legends about Batu's invasion were still fresh in popular memory. Everyone could show the place of the invisible city of Kitezh, the city saved by God: it disappeared in the lake when Batu's hordes were approaching and it will emerge again only at the Doomsday. But the author is not only an enthusiast of the local lore; he is also a former bureaucrat. On that very first page one learns not only the mysteries of the land in question but also its exact geographic location: the left bank of the Upper Volga, to be even more precise: from Rybinsk down to the mouth of river Kerzhenets. Alien settlers

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and L. W. Jones *The Other Revolution. Russian Evangelical Awakenings* (Abilene, TX: A. C. U. Press, 1996): 89-91). One can see an allusion to this movement in Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*.

[42] A separate edition was published in 1875; it consisted of four books. A story "Za Volgoi," which was first published in 1868 was incorporated into the novel.

never came to this place. Further down the Volga people are different, only here "Rus' from olden times stands on its purity."[43]

Maybe the secret of the book's popularity lay in the purity of its Russianness? It is hard to discover this secret. In the 1860s, the radical camp looked down upon Mel'nikov, remembering his past. The following invective from the *Bell* sounds threatening: "Is it true that the Nizhegorodskii litterateur, transferred to Petersburg for his elegant style – Mr. Mel'nikov prepares for the publication a story from his apostolic feats, which were directed at the conversion of our lost brothers, the Old Believers. If it is not true; perhaps, we will talk about them."[44] Could it be that an intent look of the professional denouncer in conjunction with the profound knowledge of the keen historian and ethnographer produced a national epic?

turnover of the genre

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[43] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii,* t. 2, p. 8.

[44] *Kolokol. Gazeta A. I. Gertsena i N. P. Ogareva.* Faksimil'noe izdanie, vyp. 1 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962): 132. This short note was published on June 1, 1858. The mentioning of Mel'nikov's 'elegant style' is a hint to his activities as a government informer. The promise to write about his feats is a threat to reveal the details of his participation in the persecutions of the *Raskol'niki*.

There is a small inaccuracy in this argument. A. Pechersky did not intend his novels to be 'a monument to the Old Belief', but rather a monument to the traditional Russian culture. As Mel'nikov puts it in his letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1866): "Old Believers will bring into our life "new" elements, or, better to say, "old" ones, forgotten because of the influx of western ideas and customs alien to the Russian land and the Russian soul."[46] This quotation clearly shows that, according to Mel'nikov, the influence of the Old Belief should replace western influence. It means that Old Belief, in his view, is a perfect candidate to fill the position of the Other in Russian culture. But Old Belief is not a value in itself; its mysterious image should be used for bringing back to life some elements of the traditional Russian culture. Yes, P. I. Mel'nikov was a persecutor of Old Believers, but A. Pechersky did not mean to glorify the Old Belief.

At different times, A. Pechersky was considered a mere "ethnographer,"[47] an author of "anti-bourgeois novels,"[48] or a creator of the "Russian national epic". In his recent book, Lev Anninsky enthusiastically characterizes the pith of Pechersky's two novels as the "landscape of the Russian soul". This last definition seems too general, whereas the other one – "a monument to the Old Belief' – is too narrow. We see in these novels a quest for Russianness founded on an odd mixture of longing for a particular disappearing way of life and for an ideal of enlightenment. There is tension between these two components, although the first one manifests itself in many pages and is written

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[45] Lev Anninsky *Tri eretika* (Moskva: Kniga, 1988): 213.

[46] Quoted in: P. Usov "P. I. Mel'nikov" in P. I. Mel'nikov *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, t. 1 (SPb: izd. M. O. Vol'fa, 1897): 256.

[47] A. N. Pypin *Istoriia russkoi etnografii*, t. II (SPb, 1891): 400.

with the constant and loving attention to each detail of everyday life, while the second can only be read between the lines or in a few rhetorical digressions. These two novels, published in the eighteen seventies and early eighties, during the confusing period after the emancipation and great reforms, were part and parcel of the process of a desperate Russian striving for self-recognition. It is no surprise, that a general feeling of uncertainty is present in them.

Those motives of confusion, alienation, disruption of tradition sound in unison with contemporary Russian intellectuals' fears of losing national ground. "Now the opportunity for a complete loss of cultural memory is real, because it is left to the individual, to the act of free will,"[49] said academician S. S. Averintsev appearing before students in Moscow in 1987, several month before Anninsky's book was published. Should we attribute recent interest to the novels of Andrei Pechersky and promotion to the rank of national epic to the same process of the search for identity repeating itself in the late twentieth century? Can we agree with Anninsky that the entire weight of these novels lies precisely in the minute portrayal of everyday life turning, in its wholeness, into the national epic? I will try to show that above all this book reveals uncertainty. This uncertainty becomes apparent if we concentrate our attention on the portrayal of Old Belief in the novel. We cannot analyze the novel in its entirety. Putting love and intrigue aside, we will study the image of the schism that is created in the novel. What was new in this 'artistic version' of the Old Belief?

Two premises seem obvious. First, the author's main task is to show and exalt traditional Russia; second, his attitude to the schism is definitely negative. At one point of

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[48] M. P. Yeremin "P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii). Kritiko-bibliograficheskii ocherk," in Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 6, p. 407.

his narrative Mel'nikov contemplates the following question: what is the source of cruelty that is so common among the Old Believers? He thinks "heartless Byzantines... with deadly letters of their writings cast over our good old country pernicious spirit of hatred."[50] This means that, ideologically, Mel'nikov is close to those authors who put the schism on the list of phenomena alien to old Russia. He often shows how the culture of the Old Belief suppresses traditional holidays and superstitions. But Mel'nikov is not a philosopher, he is a storyteller. His goal is not to sustain and develop the idea of outlandishness of the Old Belief, but to tell bewitching stories, and in those stories, maybe contrary to his intentions, colours blend; it becomes impossible to distinguish between old Russia and Old Believers. With the same uncritical passion he relates legends of the remote pagan past and legends about the creation of the *skity*. Old Belief is proclaimed to be alien, but its past and legends seem to be sacred. In addition, the images of Old Believers are drawn with such sympathy and warmth that it is clear they are 'natives' in the world of Russian culture.

The narrator disapproves of contemporary *skity*, but his tone completely changes when he turns to their history. Without a wink of derision or a shadow of a doubt he says that the story of the Old Believer settlements on the left bank of the Volga River "begins in a wondrous way." During the siege of the Solovetsky monastery one very old monk, Arseny, was praying day and night before the icon of Our Lady of Kazan'. This icon was old and famous. It belonged to the tsar Alexis; he presented it to the monastery even before Nikon's patriarchate. Shortly before the seizure of the monastery, Arseny heard a voice from the icon: "Follow me without doubts and where I stop, there you should set up

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[49] S. S. Averintsev "Kak nit' Ariadny", *Iunost'*, no. 12 (1987): 4.
[50] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 2, p. 303.

a cloister, and while the icon is in this monastery, the old piety[51] will blossom there." After these words, the icon rose high into the air and disappeared. Next day the monastery was seized, and Arseny was taken into custody together with other monks, but when they arrived on the mainland, he managed to escape. Once he entered the forest he saw the icon high in the air and followed it. "Trees part to let him pass; impassable marshes dry out in front of him; invisible force throws about fallen trees, twigs, and branches before him... Arseny walks and walks after the icon."[52] And when it stopped near the boundary of Sharpan, Arseny set up the first *skit* there.

This poetic legend is accompanied by the following footnote:

> The Sharpanskii skit existed for 170 years and was finally destroyed in 1853. There were 7 monks and 44 nuns there in 1718. In recent times there have been no monasteries in it, but about one hundred women lived there. It was one of the richest and the strictest *skity*. The icon of Our Lady of Kazan' that is revered by the Old Believers as miracle working has been situated in Kerzhenets Blagoveshchenskii monastery since 1849.[53]

Thanks to this footnote, the reader is returned to reality. Sometimes it seems that two narrators tell the story: one is naive and openhearted; the other is a strict know-it-all. One admires the scenery, the other places Latin names of the mentioned plants in a footnote. One strings the stories slowly, one after another, as if in a singing voice, as fairy tales; the other inserts a footnote again and explains the anachronisms. The juxtaposition of this particular legend and the footnote stands out in this exchange between the two voices. It reminds us again that the author, this naive artless narrator, was the one who destroyed the monasteries on the Kerzhenets River.[54] He searched the cells and took away precious icons. And now he tells us wonderful stories about those places that he destroyed. Is he so cynical or just so simpleminded that he does not see the irony here? No, his position is quite firm: he marvels at the stories of the past, but he despises contemporary *Raskol'niki*, and he especially dislikes their nuns.

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[51] 'Old piety' (drevlee blagochestie) was the appellation that the Old Believers themselves used instead of the 'Old Belief.'

[52] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 2, p. 321.

[53] Ibid.

We will have a better chance of understanding this position if we stop at the important points and outline the features of Mel'nikov's favorite heroes. Even though many figures with detailed life stories populate his novels, each novel focuses on one Old Believer merchant's family. One lives on the Volga's left bank, *in the forests*, the other – on the right bank, *in the mountains*. The author's favorite personage is Patap Chapurin; his family lives in the forests. His management of business and household, his unlucky quest for gold, along with the tragic love and death of his beloved daughter Nastia are the main plot lines of the first novel, *In the Forests*. Later, in the second novel, we learn about the deaths of his wife and his other daughter.

We have already mentioned that Chapurin's prototype, 'grandfather Bugrov' was so famous in Nizhegorodskaia province that he was also immortalized in Dal''s short story and in many folk tales. Dal' did not make a show of his hero's adherence to the schism, while Mel'nikov emphasized it. Even though he placed Old Belief at the center of reader's attention, he certainly did not glorify it. Mel'nikov aptly remarks that Chapurin is an Old Believer, but not an "inveterate fanatic." Chapurin's adherence to the dissent was a matter of habit, routine, and convenience: "by the schism his friendship and acquaintance with rich merchants were held, there was more credit from the schism." [55] Wherever he would go for a business trip, he was always able to stay at a good Old Believer house. Even a little known *Raskolnik* would help him. He was also the main guardian of the famous chapel in Gorodets and loved the honour and respect that this position gave him in the community. Yes, he was a little boastful and vain in his fondness of honour, but he was also a kind and tolerant man and a loving father. He also helped to establish many Old Believer *skity* (monasteries) on the river Kerzhenets. His sister, Manefa, was an influential Mother Superior in one of those cloisters.

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[54] Mel'nikov writes in his autobiography: "Semenov, where I spent my childhood and where 25 years later I happened to fulfil the imperial will concerning the abolishment of schismatic *skity* on Kerzhenets and

There is one contradiction in Chapurin's character. Being such a strong proponent of the Old Belief and the main supporter of the *skity*, Patap Maksimych never misses an opportunity to mock the nunneries. For many experts on the Raskol, it does not sound right. There is no such derisive attitude in Dal''s "Grandfather Bugrov;" and there is no evidence that the real-life Bugrov ever expressed such opinions.[56] N. S. Leskov, who considered himself Mel'nikov's disciple in the study of the schism, rebuked his teacher on this score; he commented that Mel'nikov himself treated Old Believers' feelings exactly the way Chapurin did: "there was some unpleasant official's jeering in Mel'nikov's excellent knowledge of the schism."[57]

Mel'nikov certainly does not spare his irony portraying the *skity*'s inhabitants and functionaries. Consider for instance, the escapades of Vasilii Borisych, an envoy to the monasteries from 'Moscow benefactors'. The most conspicuous feature of this 'lover of

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Chernaya Ramen'. (*Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 1, p. 317)

[55] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t.2, p. 13.

[56] See the following article about Bugrov: N. G. Perevozchikova "Staroobriadets Semenovskogo yezda P. E. Bugrov na stranitsakh romanov P. I. Mel'nikova-Pecherskogo "B lesakh" i "Na gorakh," *Staroobriadchestvo: istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost'* (Moskva, 1997): 89-91.

[57] N. S. Leskov "Narodniki i raskolovedy na sluzhbe *(*Nota bene k vospominaniiam P. S. Usova o P. I. Mel'nikove*)*," *Sobranie sochinenii v 11-ti tomakh*, t. 11 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1958): 37.

books' and 'virgin' is his weakness for the fair sex, so that his constant refrain "Oh, temptation!" sounds hilarious. Actually, the details of Moscow envoy's adventures harmonize with Mel'nikov's earlier view of the life in *skity*. He asserted, "Nowhere did hypocrisy assume such proportions as it did in skity, especially, the women's ones".[58] Over the course of time, the inhabitants of the *skity* lost their religious fervour and those monasteries turned into economic communes. Only nunneries were prosperous; by 1853 there were no men's cloisters on Kerzhenets. Women proved to be more obedient and able to maintain the established order. They worked and they prayed. Numerous benefactors sent them money and goods; those payments were not charitable donations only. "Mothers" were paid for their prayers. Here is an excerpt from the letter to the Manefa's skit written by one of those 'benefactors.' One can hear clearly the voice of this young merchant. Without any comments, Mel'nikov ironically demonstrates that prayer is just one of the goods in the market.

> Thanks to your sacred prayers I have got a fifty-kopecks gain on a pood[59] of pike perch... Yegor Trifonov wanted to outbid me on this score and lost... Attributing this God's mercy to your sacred prayers, I am sending you, mother, one hundred roubles for distribution to all cloister-dwellers and orphans, who prayed to God so well. Only by no means give anything to Ignatievy's cloister, because they pray for Yegor Trifonov... But their prayer, as I can see, does not reach God as quickly, as yours. Please, do not forget about us in the future, pray properly, so that God will give us more profit in our commerce. [60]

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[58] Quoted in: P. Usov "P. I. Mel'nikov"... p. 130.

[59] Pood is a measure of weight, equivalent to 36lb.

[60] Mel'nikov *Sobranie sochinenii,* t. 2, pp. 368-9.

This is the main contradiction of the life in *skity* that is masterly demonstrated by Mel'nikov: according to their beliefs, the nuns are supposed to live for eternity; but the needs and troubles of everyday life constantly intrude into this sacred order of things. Manefa had scarcely recovered from her grave illness when she started to ask questions about germination of seeds, and about purchasing of a new wagon. She also gave instructions to sell an old gray mare and to start digging vegetable patches. In the secret report about the state of the schism in Nizhegorodskaia province (written in 1854) Mel'nikov wrote that the main feature of the life in *skity* was hypocrisy.

Apparently, when Chapurin scolds 'mothers,' he expresses the author's point of view. Sometimes, the author's irony sounds even softer than Chapurin's straightforward jokes. The narrator is surprised by the fatness and gloss of the *skity*'s horses. Several times he mentions these fattened animals, in fact, alluding to obesity of the mothers: "Skit-dwellers do not spare oats for their horses; on good feed and little work, the horses fatten no worse than their owners."[61] Patap Maksimych is more forthright calling nuns "soakers." "You heap feed upon them, it covers their heads, but they will still howl: "Not enough! Give us more!"[62] On other occasion, Chapurin discusses the decision of the authorities to pull down *skity* on Kerzhenets. What does this pillar of the Raskol have to say about the nuns when he learns that the *skity* will soon disappear?

> They are hypocrites, parasites, nothing else. It is rumored that the authorities want to do away with the *skity*. It is a good deed, in my opinion. It will be less sin, I must say. Who lives in *skity*?.. Abstainers? Ascetics? No hope! Visit all local *skity*, go round to all Starodub settlements and take Rogozhskoe to boot and go

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[61] Ibid., t. 3, p. 251, see also p. 33.
[62] Ibid., p. 175.

find a nun who is less than nine poods of weight, less than ten vershki in a chop.[63] You will hardly find ten of such. There is their fast and their abstention![64]

Putting concern with the nuns' weight aside, the real problem here is in justifying the actions of P. I. Mel'nikov, a former official. The author could not acquit himself of the accusations; his hero, the pillar of the Kerzhenets Old Believer community, does this for him. Thanks to this support, the narrator is able to feast his eyes upon Manefa's cloister; one can feel the spirit of the olden times in its chapel, blackened by the long years, with dark roof overgrown with whitish moss. There were more than three thousand icons in this chapel. For a brief moment the author speaks about the true significance of the *skity* for the history of the motherland. They are the custodians of Russian cultural heritage. When the official church was changing icons for those of a new style, when young aristocrats were selling unnecessary old items, the Old Believers were always there, buying, collecting and saving priceless artifacts. Precious manuscripts, ancient church plate, and tsars' icons are kept in Manefa's nunnery.

But the author does not dwell on this subject; superstition and lack of education among the mothers is more important for him. One can almost see the ironic smile of the enlightened intellectual when nuns propose different means of saving Manefa (she is gravely ill, almost dying). One of them advises her to drink some wine in which a living crawfish was previously frozen, the other insists on feeding her oatmeal *kissel* with wax, the third one offers to cut a big living pike lengthwise, cover Manefa's head with it, and then singe the fish with the Epiphany's candle.[65] The only thing that the mothers do agree upon is that there is no place for a doctor in the sacred cloister. The nuns are always on guard, ready to defend their faith and their way of life. What threatens them besides well-educated bureaucrats?

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[63] Vershok is a measure of length, equivalent to 1.75 inches. Chapurin says "in a chop" (v otrube) meaning, probably, the diameter of the nuns' waists.
[64] Ibid., p. 149.
[65] Ibid., t. 2, p. 414.

One contemporary scholar notes, "Describing Chapurin's family, the writer calls up all the church calendar. The action of the novel follows the circle of the religious calendar."[66] But this is only a part of the story. The church calendar is represented in the novel mostly by the Old Believer religious services. There is another calendar, the calendar of mother nature connected with those popular holidays and rites that survived from the heathen times. Pechersky not only celebrates popular beliefs but also demonstrates their constant hopeless rivalry with the Old Believer ritualism. The presence of the official church and its clergy is only marginal. The fight is between Old Belief and the culture, which is even older.

The novel starts at the beginning of the year, on the eve of the Epiphany (January 6). Pechersky describes what peasants do on this evening. Young women and girls go beyond the village fence to collect "the Epiphany's snow" in order to whiten linens and treat forty ailments. Older women pray to Nicholas the merciful and burn wisps of straw to keep their parents warm in the other world. Men tend their horses, because "everyone knows, if someone cleans horse's hoofs on the eve of the Epiphany, his horse will not limp and will not be sick for the whole year." Children fill a cup with water, place it near the icon-case and wait: when Epiphany comes, water will heave and sky will open. Whatever one asks at this moment will come true. Chapurin's daughters want to go outside with other girls but are not allowed to do so. On such a night one should read the Psalter, not laugh and play. This exposition is preceding the story of Chapurin's family.

Indeed, any ethnographer could envy such a thorough and detailed description of one night.

The second book begins one evening shortly before the Shrove (Maslenitsa), at the girls' gathering in Manefa's cloister. Girls sing and laugh. An older nun that is supervising this gathering is angry; she wants to turn the conversation to a more appropriate subject and asks, "What is tomorrow? The day of what saint?" It turns out that tomorrow is the day of Ephrem the Syrian.[67] The next question follows, "What one should do for his sacred memory?" The answer of one mischievous girl sounds like a bombshell for a pious mother, "To feed the brownie (*domovoi*)." "Wha-a-a-at? What did you say?" The girl laughs and explains that on this day peasants leave some *kasha* for the brownie, so that he will be kind for the whole year. What a scene follows! The girls laugh; the mother shouts at them until the mischievous one asks for forgiveness and answers the question properly. Reconciliation is final after girls sing a spiritual song, by the end of which most of them are crying. Here is the translation of this long gloomy chant:

> Alas, what a blow,
> Turn for me to go,
> I don't know when
> And where will be taken from here...
> I am scared of the Judgment Day...
> Where will I appear then?

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[66] Perevozchikova, "Staroobriadets Semenovskogo yezda..," p. 90.

[67] Pechersky does not disclose the exact date of the event at the beginning of each book, but names the church holiday – the eve of the Epiphany, the day of Ephrem the Syrian (January 28) so that the date must be known to Russians.

My flesh is ailing,
My soul is too sinful.
You, oh death, are ugly and frightful.
Your image throws a scare,
You hasten to me rapidly,
Your scythe and horns concealed,
You go barefoot and naked everywhere.
Oh Death! For you there is no aegis –
Even from tsars you take their crowns,
You do not linger for nobles and bishops,
You do not accept any gifts or vows;
You will want my soul soon
To give it to God for the dreadful doom.
O, how bitterly I will scream
After one look at the terrible judge.[68]

What do we learn from this scene? First of all, there is another popular tradition that withstands the Old Belief. This peasant popular culture is rich with pagan vestiges; its rites and superstitions are part and parcel of everyone's upbringing.[69] In the *skity* even mentioning those rites is strictly prohibited. Old Belief is the faith of the literate. It is a culture of books and manuscripts. Nuns do not tolerate oral tradition of pagan origin. Why? What is the main difference between the two? Old pagan gods are cheerful. Their rites are life asserting, full of hope for better future in this life. At the end of the scene above the old nun reminds the girls of the following saying: "Laughter brings sin." This attitude was characteristic for medieval Russian religious culture; there were several sayings similar to this one. Old Believers are mostly concerned with the next world; the accent of their worldview is on eternity: they are preparing for the Last Judgment.

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[68] Ibid., t. 2, pp. 342-3.

[69] Today many scholars write about "duality of Russian cultural consciousness" (B. A. Uspensky "Dualisticheskii kharakter russkoi srednevekovoi kul'tury: (Na materiale "Khozhdeniia za tri moria" Afanasiia Nikitina," *Vtorichnye modeliruiushchie sistemy* (Tartu, 1979).

This juxtaposition of "merry old Gods" with their sacred songs and rites to the gloomy monotonous life in *skity* continues throughout the book. The author starts the third book with the description of amusements and rituals connected with the birthday of the Mother Humid Earth and other sacred old holidays of late spring and early summer, then cut himself short with the following phrase: "There is no place for parties in *skity*..."[70] He explains that nuns intimidate the youth of neighboring villages with stories about hell and Satan's schemes and there is less merry-making in those villages than in other parts of Russia.

Exactly the same kind of juxtaposition is used at the beginning of the fourth book. It begins with the love-story of Mother Humid Earth and Yarilo (the sun), with the explanation of rites connected with a merry holiday, the day of Ivan Kupala when one has to collect herbs (June 24). All night young people play around Kupala's fires, and "from the inaccessible height, pure torrents of love and life pour over the earth." And again, after enjoying this idyllic picture, one stumbles upon a mournful continuation: "Now Kupala's fires are not burnt in the forests, on the left bank of Volga. The light God Yarilo is not celebrated. The old Russian rite is completely destroyed."[71] Instead, mothers established skit holidays with hearty meals. People gather for those free meals in large numbers, and god-loving mothers read to them from the *Stoglav* about Ivan's Day, "men, women and girls gather for... devil's songs and dances and for repulsive deeds... and those Hellene charms are repudiated and damned."[72] The cheerfulness of popular rites is dangerous for the sombre nuns. We need to follow this thread and take a closer look at the world of joy and laughter that is juxtaposed in the novel to the life in *skity*.

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[70] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 3, p. 10.
[71] Ibid., p. 292.

In the classic work on laughter in medieval Russia, D. S. Likhachev and A. M. Panchenko indicate that laughter has one important function among others – "to reveal the truth, to take off the reality covers of etiquette, ceremoniousness, artificial inequality."[73] A lot of characteristic features of time and popular attitudes could be distinguished through the analysis of the laughing culture. In Bakhtin's words, carnival "counteracts the gloomy, one-sided official seriousness which is born of fear, is dogmatic and inimical to evolution and change."[74] One can study the reality through the anti-world of laughter: the normal world is often turned inside out in a joke. Who is laughing *in the forests*? Why are they laughing?

One heroine is laughing more than anyone else. According to many critics, her image is the highest achievement of Mel'nikov the writer. Her name is Flenushka. Flenushka is Manefa's ward. In fact, she is Manefa's own daughter, but nobody knows that, even Flenushka herself. Life in a *skit* does not tame this "fire-girl." Flenushka laughs, dances, merrily sings, and invents all kind of tricks. Her main dream is to arrange a "wedding by departure" (*svad'ba ukhodom*), the one in which the groom steals the bride. Flenushka cannot arrange this wedding for herself. Although she does have a friend who wants to marry her, she would not cause any pain to Manefa. First, she wants to marry Chapurin's older daughter, Nastia. After Nastia's tragic death, Flenushka decides to marry Nastia's sister, lazy and sleepy Parasha to Vasily Borisych, an envoy to the *skity* from Moscow benefactors. The only goal of this risky undertaking (Chapurin is a law into himself) is fun and laughter. "The great *nachetchik*[75], zealous upholder of the old piety, famous for his strict morals and fasting, will marry in the Nikonian church and even steal his bride from a *skit*... What laughter there will be, what laughter!"[76]

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[72] Ibid.

[73] D. S. Likhachev, A. M. Panchenko, N. V. Ponyrko *Smekh v drevnei Rusi* (Leningrad: "Nauka," 1984): 16.

[74] M. M. Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Ann Arbor, 1973): 133.

On Flenushka's part, it is also an attempt to participate in real life, to tear away from the monotonous, sombre life in the *skit*. Going on pilgrimage through the forests, "whimsical Flenushka" rebukes Vasily Borisych: "Let us talk simply. Once in a blue moon you break out into fresh air, into the open, and even here you are with your holy books! Aren't you afraid of God?" Then she laughs loudly when one of the mothers, obese Arkadya, reads a homily and tumbles into slush in the middle of it. Even a stream of Arkadya's invectives does not stop her laughter. In these episodes, simple life and hearty laughter are set off against repetitive, hypocritically pious, ceremonious life in *skity*.

Mel'nikov often speaks ironically about obese mothers and their hypocrisy, but some of their images, especially clever and strict Manefa are drawn with such warmth that one cannot forget their fates. Most of them are driven to *skity* either by poverty or by some personal tragedy. They are saved and soothed by this life. Flenushka's funny songs and laughter are a protest against the eternal peace of this monotonous existence. In the novel the *skity* represent Old Belief as a whole: they are keepers of the tradition;

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[75] Nachetchik is a person well read in the Scriptures.
[76] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 3, p. 526.

whatever happens, they are in the center of author's attention. 'Moscow benefactors' do not appear on the pages of the novel. These rich Moscow merchants, the leaders of the schismatic community send letters and an envoy with the advice to accept Austrian priesthood. The necessity of making an important decision breaks the nuns' peace and quiet.

The problem of Austrian priesthood is discussed quite often in the book. In the beginning, when we do not know yet all the members of the Chapurin family, we are already introduced to the complexities of this question. Chapurin brings the news, but his wife has her doubts about the new bishop. Patap Maksimych breaks them with an unbeatable argument: "All my buyers will follow him. I would not quarrel with them because of such trifles."[77] Mel'nikov would disagree with his personage on this point. He certainly did not see the problem of Austrian priesthood as a trifle. He returns to this question so many times in his novel that his bureaucratic nervousness is quite obvious. It is the question of power and influence in the Old Believer community; it is a question of its unity or disintegration. Mel'nikov remembers how alarmed all the Russian establishment was by the appearance of a new bishop from abroad. For the government, it was also a question of the *Raskol'niki*'s loyalty.

There are a lot of quarrels on Kerzhenets on this problem. The nuns cannot agree whether to accept the new bishop or not. They argue, they fight, they call each other heretics and stop taking water from the same well. In these shallow quarrels and discussions one can fully understand Mel'nikov's idea of schism. It is very similar to Dal''s association of the Old Belief with stupidity. Mel'nikov even reinforces this position. He emphasizes the role of women in the Old Believer families and communities, at the same time demonstrating crass ignorance of those women. "Woman is like a sack, she carries whatever one puts in," "you are a woman; therefore, cannot think for yourself," says Chapurin. Women govern *skity*; *skity* represent the Old Belief in the novel; the conclusion is obvious. Old Belief pushes people into the world of ignorance.

But the novel in its entirety outgrew this conclusion. Mel'nikov's two most-loved personages, Chapurin and Flenushka, surrender to the routine of piety, but still, both of them have occasional transgressions. Chapurin organizes carousal in the Manefa's cloister during its main yearly holiday, when nuns from all Kerzhenets monasteries come for the *sobor* (council). Chapurin warns his sister: "You will have the sobor and we will raise hell here (ty – sobor, a my – sodom)." The nuns do not get a wink of sleep that night. The author deemed "Patap Maksimych was a true Great Russian: devout, zealous to the faith of the fathers, but a great master of idle talk; when on the loose, he is not even averse to blaspheming." From Flenushka, we learn those mischevious songs that young Old Believers like:

Our Old Believer Priest
Had a wife
Out of her mind,
Not right in the head at all.
The Old Believer priest
Was kind to girls
He didn't have a penny
But his cassock was good.

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[77] Mel'nikov, t.2, p. 21.

He takes off his cassock,
Gives it to beautiful girls.

Out of this intertwining of piety and mischief (even blasphemy) the picture of "true Russian" life on the Upper Volga is growing.[78] Through many detailed ethnographic descriptions we learn about the coexistence of two traditions, pagan and schismatic.[79] The *skity* slowly but surely destroyed pagan rites but some of those rites were still practiced. The author shows that people on the Upper Volga did not choose their faith; they believed what their parents and grandparents believed.

The author provides a snapshot of local tradition in the late 1840s, before the Great Reforms. The dogma, ritual, and everyday life of the *Raskol'niki* are not the author's sole interest. One can only marvel at his competence and at the amount of details employed in describing the traditional Russian way of life: minute enumeration of clothes as well as food prepared for different occasions be it birthday, wedding, funeral, or skit's holiday; popular legends, superstitions, songs and forgotten rituals; histories and peculiarities of the different trades in which the natives of the Volga region were involved. The list seems to be endless.

It is important for us that in all these intricate descriptions Old Belief is not juxtaposed to the official church. As a result, the question about the Russianness of the Old Belief is not even posed. If the novel becomes more than just a collection of ethnographic sketches, it is not because the author's favorite heroes represent true Russianness, as L. Anninsky maintains. This assurance we would attribute to the critic's own anxiety about Russianness. His book was published in 1988. The century was close to an end, Soviet ideology was a laughing stock among the intelligentsia, and the search for an alternative, for true Russianness had began. We did not discuss the intricacies of the plot, of the many loves and deaths in the novel. Maybe in the intricacies of the plot, in feelings and problems common to all mankind one will find the secret of the novel's popularity. But our goal was different. It was to find out what was new about this artistic view of the schism. How, if at all could this novel change public perception of the Old Belief?

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[78] Ibid., t. 3, p. 30.

[79] The official church is hardly mentioned. The only priest that appears in the novel has the nickname *Sushilo* (the Dryer), because he always dries hay in the church when the weather is rainy. He is mostly

According to Anninsky, it was Mel'nikov who managed to create "an epos of Russian national life, its deep, "underground," "eternal" horizon, above which great historical epics of Tolstoy, Herzen, and Dostoevsky are built." [80] What one misses in Mel'nikov's interpretation is the difference between those two levels of literary creations: the "underground," "eternal" level where Mel'nikov works and "above the ground" where great Russian writers are placed. If the "underground," organic level is the level where beliefs and traditions are presented indistinguishably, as a stream of life, then on the upper level the author's ideas organize the narration and structuralize presentation of this stream. If this interpretation is correct, it means that ideas are missing in Mel'nikov's narration. He does not offer us an exact concept of schism, only its picturesque descriptions, and as a result Old Belief remains as much of a mystery as it was before. One can see a positive effect of this ambiguity: it stirred up further public interest in the Old Belief. While it was mysterious, a part of completely alien life "in the forests," it was

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concerned with taking bribes from his Old Believer parishioners and with writing denunciations on those who did not bring the 'gifts' in time.

[80] Anninsky, *Tri eretika*, p. 212.

fascinating for the Russian public. Let us see what happened when the action was brought to light "on the mountains."

3.3 Why Did Their Gardens Blossom? Models of Religious Dissent in the Novel *On the Mountains*

Many critics approach *In the Forests* and *On the Mountains* as one epopee, but there is a difference between the two. The first one pays more attention to popular tradition, the second to the upbringing of an individual. One can find in *On the Mountains* elements of a novel of trials and of a *Bildungsroman*. Of course, there are several plot lines. At first, one learns about family life of a rich merchant, a widow, Marko Danilych Smolokurov and his charming daughter Dunia, then for a long time, one has to follow one Smolokurov's intrigue: he is trying to cheat a young merchant, Merkulov. Flenushka's taking the veil is also part of the narration. But the central personage of the novel is Dunia Smolokurova. It is not only her education and her trials though that the author finds necessary to discuss.

In the first novel the narration was moved by the calendar, by the important popular holidays. If Yarilo the sun was closer to Mother Humid Earth, then it was time for people to love each other. In the second novel we meet several young people, each of whom has a story, and special attention is paid to the education of each. Dunia spends several years in the *skity* studying mostly old church books and needlework. Thanks to the constant loving attention of her aunt, who accompanies her to the *skity*, Dunia does not learn about girls' mischief.

Nikita Merkulov is not taught at home but sent to a commercial school by his hateful stepmother. When he returns, it is hard for him to find a place in the community: he smokes, and his manners and clothes are different. Only the loving attention of the Doronins, another merchant family of his distant relatives, helps him to become a decent member of the Old Believer community.

The Doronin sisters are raised in simplicity but with love and kindness. First, a nun from *skity* teaches them to read, and then their father hires a poor old teacher to complete their education. The author's resume was as follows: "Lisa and Natasha were raised in the strict simplicity of native Russian life not corrupted by beliefs alien to our way of life, by foreign innovations adverse to Russian turn of mind, or by home-bred dull superstition..."[81] So even in Old Believer families there was some way to avoid superstition, but in general Mel'nikov is not of a high opinion about their teachers.

Let us take, for example, an image of Anisia *Krasnoglazikha* (Redeye) the famous "wisest teacher" of Old Believers' children. The devil and antichrist were the main 'heroes' of her mentoring. "She used to talk for long hours about the devil's designs and drew such a detailed picture of tortures for sinners, as if she herself had just jumped out of hell", grins Pechersky.[82] He always distinguishes precious elements of the vanishing traditional Russian culture from the hollow rites and words essential for the dogmatists. Here is his verdict on *Krasnoglazikha*:

> Never a word on the Lord's commandments, love of God and one's neighbor; hard drinking, frauds, malicious words, slander, theft … are not sins, but a fall,

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[81] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 4, p. 156.
[82] Ibid., p. 32.

> that may be cleared by repentance. Appropriate bows [*ustavnye poklony*], fast on prescribed days,
>
> and most of all "no contact with heretics" – those are the moral duties that teachers instill in *Raskol'niki*' children.[83]

The Old Believers' way of educating their children often becomes a subject of Pechersky's mockery. And it is clearly an important subject considering P. I. Mel'nikov's complete adherence to the ideals of the Enlightenment. According to him, the Russian government did not need to fight with the Schism; the only infallible remedies were publicity, education for the people, and absence of religious persecutions.[84] Does it mean that the light of education will shatter Old Belief and sects, that the author does not distinguish between them?

One could certainly agree, if it were not for a seemingly negligible detail: the blossoming of the sectarians' gardens. The first novel, *In the Forests*, certainly contains a lot of material about Old Russian customs and rituals. But *On the Mountains*, especially its second volume, is dominated by images of sectarians (Khlysts), which had rarely received any attention from critics or scholars. The case was too simple: they were evil. In his "Letters on Schism" (1862) P. I Mel'nikov identified Khlysts as heretics, completely alien to the Russian religion and the Russian way of life.

This judgment is repeated by many scholars, but none address the following question: why were most of these 'alien' sectarians happy and content, while all Old Believers, keepers of the Old Russian order, were unfortunate and miserable, and

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Mel'nikov "Pis'ma o raskole," *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 6, p. 200.

Orthodox priests are ultimate scoundrels? This fact did not go unnoticed by Pechersky's editors. In a letter from *Russkii Vestnik* we read:

> Please, kind Pavel Ivanovich, pay attention to the following circumstance. There are two sides: all Khlysts are described as virtuous people with lofty thoughts, whereas Orthodox clergy are all drunkards and thieves. It would not hurt so much, if only one side was presented. As it is now – the comparison is too sharp.[85]

Thus, many of the sectarians have wonderful blossoming gardens. While their Orthodox neighbors suffer from poor harvests, the sectarians always enjoy not only good crops in the fields, but also a variety of fruits and exotic flowers in their gardens. If the main theme of the novel as suggested by L. Anninsky, is "a general, total landscape of the soul taken in its organic unity with the landscape of the place,"[86] why is it that only people alien in spirit are able to cherish and adorn the soil? Is it a sign of the profound disappointment over the national soul or of some spiritual uncertainty of the author?

The easiest way to address the difference in his attitude towards Old Believers and sectarians is to take a closer look at the images of the latter. The central and most important figure is Mar'ia Ivanovna Alymova, a land-owning lady. This 'woman in black', neither young, nor old, "with the traces of rare beauty still retained in the features of her face" immediately stirs reader's curiosity. Despite the fact that the narrator in both novels wants to appear simpleminded and entertain his readers with a lot of life stories, even of some minor figures, the image of this lady is veiled in mystery for quite some time.

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[85] Quoted in: P. Usov "P. I. Mel'nikov", p. 305.

[86] L. Anninsky *Tri eretika* (Moskva: Kniga, 1988): 203.

First, a young merchant Nikita Merkulov encounters her on board of a ship. "A slender waist, a modestly lowered gaze, and some peculiar lustre of her gentle blue eyes involuntarily drew to her Merkulov's attention."[87] Then, Merkulov listens to some gossip about the lady and learns that this rich, kind and clever woman is almost forty years old. In her youth, she was beautiful as an angel, but has been wearing black for the last fifteen years, probably because she happens to belong to some strange faith. Her father, who also belonged to this faith, grew wonderful gardens and hothouses with overseas trees and flowers.

The next day, she appears for a moment on the hotel stairs when Merkulov hurries to meet with his fiancée. Suddenly, "all in black, with her slim waist and majestic, dignified gait Mar'ia Ivanovna slowly walks downstairs". She darts a glance at him. "Something mysterious, something enchanting was in this glance."[88] "Maybe, it is a bad sign", thinks Merkulov, and his long-awaited rendezvous with his fiancée goes wrong from the very first minute.

A small misunderstanding between the young merchant and his bride to be is cleared up the same day, and Merkulov will never again see the woman in black. So, why did the author need him to introduce us to this lady through him? It seems that Merkulov is the best choice for creating the '*ostranenie*' effect for Alymova's appearance.[89] Although Merkulov was born in an Old Believer family, he left his home at an early age, received secular education, and acquired some worldly tastes and habits. It is to him that Mar'ia Ivanovna must look extremely strange. So, she appears and vanishes as a fairy-tale personage, not as a real woman.

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[87] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 4, p. 298.
[88] Ibid., p. 351.

The third time (or should we say the third flash, so fleeting are Alymova's first appearances) occurs when there is an accident in front of the hotel windows. When Dunia's close friend Agrafena Petrovna is crossing the street with her two small daughters, suddenly, a two-horse carriage comes flying toward them. Agrafena Petrovna is horror-struck, she can scarcely remain on her feet: her smaller girl is lying on the roadway, near the wheels of the carriage. Of course, it is the stately 'woman in black' who brings the frightened and unharmed girl upstairs, into the Dunia's room, and reassures the girl's mother. It is a timely meeting for Dunia who has just learned that the man with whom she fell in love has left her for another girl. "Sorrowful Dunia liked Mar'ia Ivanovna. Her soft and gentle voice, heart-to-heart talk, tender kind smile, modest but stately movements, and the penetrating clear gaze of the wonderful radiant blue eyes attracted the girl whose heart was lost for earthly joys."

It turns out that millionaire Smolokurov was a former serf of Alymova's late father. For him, she is still 'baryshnia' (barin's daughter), so the proud merchant is flattered when Mar'ia Ivanovna takes an interest in Dunia and invites the girl to visit the estate of her cousins, the Lupovitsy. The enchanted and intrigued reader intently follows this journey. The fairy-tale continues in the description of the Lupovitsy estate and its inhabitants. The Lupovitsky brothers rarely go out to the fields or threshing barn, and even though their soil is no better than the neighbors', no one else has such good crops. The harvest of orchard fruits is always excellent; more fish are caught in their river and lakes than in the whole region.

Besides the sectarians who live in Lupovitsy, we meet an eighty-year old white-haired retired sailor Furkasov who is weeding cabbage patches and humming. Then we

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[89] Invented by V. B. Shklovsky, the term 'ostranenie' means 'a making an object look strange'.

observe the small, clean cozy house surrounded by flower gardens. This house belongs to the poor nobleman Dmitrii Stroinskii, who "planted fruit trees of all kinds with his own hands and took excellent care of them"[90]. Flowers are the only interest of this otherwise passionless man. The list of beautiful flowers he has in his garden takes up several lines. And finally, we approach the house of the former postmaster Kislov. There used to be an abundant harvest of fruit in his orchard, so that each year Kislov "was envied by every single one of the townspeople"[91].

Importantly, most of the sectarians are people who at some point of their life chose to join the sect, while Old Believers and Orthodox Christians just followed the path of their parents. There is an indisputable rule reiterated several times throughout the book by Old Believers: "Live by the faith in which you were born." By explaining the sectarians' reasons for conversion, A. Pechersky clearly contrasts the lifeless God-worshipping of the Old Believers with the animation of the sectarians, the formality and coldness of the official church with the warmth of mysticism. Kislov's inquisitive mind was troubled by the negligence of service and spiritual stagnation among the priests. So, the postmaster delved deeply into the reading of the Gospel. "But nowhere could he find a doctor for his spirit, there was no a wise word from anyone. That was when he understood the saying: "There used to be wooden vessels and golden priests, but now -- golden vessels and wooden priests".[92]

The same inquisitiveness and spiritual hunger pushes young and naïve Dunia Smolokurova into the circle of sectarians. Her aunt likes to talk about the rituals over and over again, but Dunia is not interested in them. "In the morning of her life she realized, that faith is not in the ritual, that life is given to a person not only for rites, and that rituals have to have a mysterious meaning. Nobody could explain her this meaning, and indifference to the superficial in faith was growing in her every day."[93] Being among the Khlysts brings some hope at first. But delving more and more into their secret teaching and rites, Dunia realizes that in their midst she cannot obtain the desired 'light of truth'. The same 'mist and darkness' surrounds her, as in the skit, says Pechersky. And it seems that he is an ardent opponent of both, Old Belief and *Khlystovshchina*:

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[90] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 5, p. 53.
[91] Ibid., p. 57.

> There is no teacher, there is no leader, but an inquisitive commoner is in constant search for the answers to puzzling questions and for a kind mentor. But there is still no trace of such a mentor. It will be good, if this truth-seeker runs across an Old Believer. The Raskol, as an outcome of ignorance, tore itself away from church unity just because of some letter and rite; however, its faith is as pure as that of the true church. But if his inquisitive mind falls under the influence of some Khlysts' prophet, he is not a Christian anymore. Then he has his own God, his own christs, prophets, and virgins, his own beliefs and rituals, all alien to Christianity.[94]

As one can see from this excerpt, to belong to the 'true church' is something reasonable. It is in the true church, that one must be able to find all the right answers to the 'puzzling questions'. And therefore, the church is connected with the ideal of Enlightenment, with the power of reason, whereas religious deviations are contrasted with this ideal. Interestingly, these contrapositions are made along different lines: if the essence of church is reason, Old Belief is opposed to it as ignorance (and therefore the

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[92] Ibid., p. 58.
[93] Ibid., p. 289

difference is reparable), and *Khlystovshchina* as insanity. This difference is very important, because Pechersky's novels set the pattern of treating these images. Henceforth, Old Belief was an 'outcome of ignorance', in need of bureaucratic care and enlightening efforts, whereas sectarianism was the perfect Other – absolutely alien, insane, spiritually elevated. It is obvious that insanity was much more engaging than ignorance, and the thread connecting Russian public with the past through the interest in Old Belief was torn at this point.

Usually, part of the past could become a part of the cultural memory if a talented author established some kind of emotional connection with it. Mel'nikov created this kind of connection in the first novel and destroyed it in the second. Now all his beloved heroes were certain of the moral superiority of the official church. The Orthodox priest saves Dunia Smolokurova from the sectarians, and she contemplates joining the official church. Chapurin would never do this, he is sure that "one should die in that faith in which he was born," but he approves Dunia's decision and asserts, "the truth is on their side, not on ours."[95]

Thus, Mel'nikov's concept is clear: the true "Great Russian" church versus Old Belief as an amendable deviation and versus the Christ's Faith as an Other, as insanity. To prove the point about the 'insanity' of the Khlysts, I will quote Mel'nikov's recollections of the last meeting with his mad grandmother.[96] He was five years old.

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[94] Ibid., p. 287.

[95] Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 5, p. 433.

[96] Mel'nikov reveals the reason for his grandmother's (Lizaveta Ivanovna) madness in autobiography. In 1796, her husband left her with four children (one of them was Mel'nikov's father) and without getting a divorce married a 19- year-old girl. Lizaveta Ivanovna lived in poverty in Kazan' and went mad, while her husband lived openly with a new family in Petersburg. (Mel'nikov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 1, pp. 308-311).

> Meeting with grandmother Lizaveta Ivanovna is engraved on my memory. As if it is happening now, I can visualize this clean neat old woman, all in black, sitting in Voltairian chairs near the window open to the shadowy garden. She was surrounded with flowers. All her outbuilding was filled with blooming plants. She loved flowers very much and taking care of them was her only occupation. She did not recognize my mother and father right away; having recognized them, she cried a lot, took me in her hands, put me in her lap, and was gently patting me with the flowers of white lilac. I knew that grandmother was mad and dreaded that she would eat me up.[97]

More than fifty years later the writer still remembered his mad grandmother's predilection for flowers and gave this feature to all *Khlysty* in his novel. This is why their images are surrounded by sweet mystery, as sweet as aroma of those flowers that they are growing.

By way of conclusion, it is important to note that the clarity of Mel'nikov's scheme seems to be a consequence of his bureaucratic past. Accustomed to approaching any movement politically, to always considering first what good or harm this particular group could bring to the state and to the official church as a part of this state, the author certainly simplifies the phenomena that he is describing. With all the richness of material and many different personages, conceptually this book does not offer anything that could not be included in some kind of official report. Granted, Mel'nikov did have his share of problems with censorship, mostly because of his criticism of the official church, which was far from his ideal of the "true church." But as an official, he did write honestly about the same things in his official reports. This was one of the reasons why his career was not as brilliant as it promised to be at the beginning of his government service.

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[97] Ibid., p. 315.

In the sixties, he started to work with the vast collection of documents concerning the schism kept in the archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He envisaged a long road ahead, a thorough work of putting in order, classifying, analyzing, and publishing many documents. Apparently, his new views were considered incompatible with this task. Mel'nikov was debarred from this work and the collection was given to the notorious F. V. Livanov, who hated Old Believers and incorporated many documents in his four-volume compilation of sketches *Raskol'niki i ostrozhniki* (Schismatics and Convicts).

It is hard to imagine a more uncongenial personality for such an undertaking! The books are full of verbal abuse, invented dialogues, and scornful notes. Livanov's attitude to popular religiosity is fully expressed in the following statement: "There is no such nonsense that would not find its way to our people, there is no such rubbish, in which it would be impossible to convince them."[98] Several rich and respectable Moscow merchants were dishonored in these books; Leskov vaguely hinted at some cases of extortion and blackmail that preceded the appearance of Livanov's books.[99]

Mel'nikov was not allowed to continue this work, because he assumed a more enlightened stand, but still, the official apprehensive interest in the schism can be detected in his novels, especially in the second one. In a way, this interest is similar to the interest of revolutionary circles. It is functional: in both cases, neither governing nor revolutionary circles were interested in the schism *per se*; they were not interested in its nature, past, and values. They were only concerned with its actions as an alleged enemy or ally. Even if Livanov's books were relatively popular because of their scandalous character, they were not important in drawing the attention of the intelligentsia to the problem of Russian popular religiosity.

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[98] F. V. Livanov "Deistvitel'nyi statskii sovetnik Liprandi i skoptsy," *Raskol'niki i ostrozhniki*, 2-e izd. T.2 (S-Peterburg, 1872): 537.

All Russia read Mel'nikov's novels with great interest. It was mostly through these novels that the schism entered popular consciousness throughout the twentieth century.[100] Any author writing about the schism in the beginning of the twentieth century necessarily had some kind of reference to Mel'nikov. P. D. Boborykin was interested in the problem of the schism for a long time: some of the heroes of his novels written in the 1880s were Old Believers or former Old Believers.[101] In 1902 Boborykin published a novel *Ispovedniki*, mostly concerned with evangelical movement. In 1903-04 he writes a huge novel about Old Believers, *Obmirshchenie*.[102] A personage of this novel, Liubov' Proshivina, a teacher in Old Believer school, likes to reread *In the Forests*, "one of her favorite novels." When some of Boborykin's heroes arrive in the Makarii's Fair, where part of *On the Mountains* took place, they encounter a girl selling photographs of Old Believer life. One of those pictures is a photo of an old man—"the coachman, who in the forties and fifties was driving the author of *In the Forests* and *On the Mountains* to destroy *skity*."[103] This photo was especially telling: Mel'nikov became a part of popular image of the schism. When one of the Old Believers refers to his works, he does not

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[99] Leskov, "Narodniki i raskolovedy," p. 43.
[100] I have checked the database of the World Catalogue and discovered that in ten years (1989-99) Mel'nikov's novels were published at least six times!
[101] See for example: *Kitai-gorod* (1882) and *Vasilii Terkin* (1892).
[102] It is hard to translate this word; it is a part of an Old Believer vocabulary. It means concessions to mundane interests. Education and love are major temptations that many of Boborykin's heroes are trying to overcome. One cannot be a true Old Believer if he or she becomes a part of contemporary world. So the best of them are struggling to protect themselves from the corrupting breath of this world.
[103] Boborykin, *Obmirshchenie*, p. 484.

mention the name, but simply says, "the late author of *In the Forests*."[104] It was impossible to start a conversation about the Old Belief without referring to Mel'nikov's books. A hero of another story, M. Kuzmin's *Kryl'ia* (Wings, 1907), says about his acquaintance that he is "an authentic *Raskolnik* from Volga... similar to Pechersky, but less sugary."[105]

All this should remind us of Bakhtin's thought that a novel participates in social life not only as a reflection of its time. It can also play a role of its own, and its place in social reality will not be lesser than the place of the phenomena reflected in it.[106] The example of Mel'nikov's novels shows that fictional images can even replace real-life phenomena in popular consciousness. Bakhtin advised to follow a three-step analysis of a literary work: from its place in literature, to its place in ideological environment, and only then—to its role in social process.

As literary creations, Mel'nikov's novels were quite unusual in their subject matter, hence the huge interest of the public. For the first time one could peep at the enigmatic world of "the forests." Ideologically, Mel'nikov is far from being a pioneer or an original thinker. His interpretation of the Old Belief was formed along two major lines. His strong attachment to the ideas of Enlightenment has already been analyzed in this work. Another important line was administrative classification. Mel'nikov was a former bureaucrat and he brought his bureaucratic zeal into the novels. Suffice it to remind that Leskov always juxtaposed official and popular culture in his stories. The finale of *On the Mountains* was almost serene: a nice and polite official (maybe, Mel'nikov himself) came to close and destroy the *skity*. Yes, it was hard for the nuns to leave the precious place, but they were informed about it in good time, and they were prepared.

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[104] Ibid., 390.
[105] M. Kuzmin *Kryl'ia* (Petrograd: Petropolis, 1923): 42.

In a way, Mel'nikov's novels closed the all-Russian discussion on the Old Belief. They were more interesting than anything ever written on the subject; they clearly distinguished between the Old Believers and the sectarians and classified them. The problems of the Old Belief were now perceived as personal problems of Mel'nikov's personages. Sectarians could still fascinate modernist authors: their madness was grasped as something congenial, reminiscent of an artist's enthusiasm and inspiration. At the same time, most of the Old Believers were stubborn fools; the best of them realized that the truth was on the side of the official church. As a consequence, the problem "Old Belief as true Russia" was mentioned less and less.

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[106] M. Bakhtin *Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii* (New York: Serebrianyi vek, 1992): 39.

CHAPTER IV: N. S. LESKOV

Russian writer N. S. Leskov, whom Dostoevsky scolded frequently in his articles and called 'a man of genius' in his private letters,[1] definitely does not belong to the list of Great Russian writers whose books are usually analyzed in works on Russian nationalism. We tend to admire big serious volumes and disregard airy short stories or frivolous anecdotes. Frightened by the name of Tolstoy and by the size of *War and Peace* we are sure in advance, even without reading, that this epic novel will tell us more about Russian identity than a popular tale. It seems ridiculous to believe otherwise. The popularity of Leskov's short stories in Russia was enormous.[2] He wrote about the simple people using the spoken tongue and was, in M. Gorky's opinion, "the most Russian of all Russian writers."

4.1 Leskov's Life and His "Third Approach" to the Old Belief

Leskov's personality and family background seem remarkably pertinent to this particular project: his grandfather was a village priest, the writer spent his childhood in a small village playing with local children, he knew the peasants' everyday life to the very last detail, and later wrote that those childhood years nurtured in him "a fortunate religiosity, which could easily reconcile faith with reason."[3] One of Leskov's biographers called his origin "shaken up": his paternal grandfather was a priest, who married a girl from a merchant family, Leskov's father did not want to join the clergy and became an official, whereas the mother was from a noble family.[4]

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[1] Dostoevsky wrote about Leskov's personages: "Gogol never had anything more typical and more truthful... This is a stroke of genius!" Quoted in: Iu. Seleznev "Leskov i Dostoevsky," *V mire Leskova. Sbornik statei* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1983): 125.

[2] In his sketches in the history of reading in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, A. I. Reitblat proposes several indicators of popularity. The size of honorarium is one of them. In the 1880s, at the peak of his popularity Leskov received as much as Dostoevsky did – 300 rubles per printer's sheet. At the time, only Turgenev was paid more – 350. (A. I. Reitblat *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo MGPI, 1991): 88). Other sources for determining popularity were reports of public libraries. Having analyzed the reports of nine libraries of different parts of the country for two years (1896-97 – after Leskov's death), Reitblat concluded that Leskov was one of the ten most read authors. (Ibid., p. 74).

One can say that all Leskov's life was somewhat "shaken up." At the age of fifteen, he dropped out of the gymnasium where he spent five years while having passed the exams only for the second grade. In other words, Leskov did not complete any formal education. Having dropped out, he started to work as a minor clerk in the criminal court in Orel. Three years later, in 1849 he moved to Kiev in order to stay with the family of his uncle, a professor of medicine and to work as a clerk in the army-recruiting bureau. His formative years, from eighteen to twenty five were spent in Kiev. No wonder, he cherished his love for Ukraine till his last years.[5] In Kiev he worked a lot and proved to be an efficient official having received several promotions and commendations during those seven years. The writer to be became close with many young university professors, his uncle's friends. He spent hours reading or arguing about the newest books. Those were his years of education, even though the lion's share of time was spent in the office.

During the last years of Nicholas I's reign, recruitment was a heartbreaking business: young peasants were to serve in the army for twenty-five years, they were sure that they parted with their family forever. Deceit and bribery, grief and anguish accompanied the young clerk every day. The most sorrowful was the fate of Jewish boys who were taken into the army as "kantonisty" at the age of twelve. We will discuss their suffering later in connection with one of Leskov's stories, in which he wrote: "God forbid to recall what heart-rending horrors accompanied all this."[6] The years of the Crimean War (1854-55) must have been especially demanding and frustrating: Kiev was close to the theater of war, and Leskov's office needed to conduct one urgent recruitment after another. Young unprepared conscripts were sent to die en-masse. We have already mentioned that the Crimean war demonstrated the decrepit nature of Russian administration. Leskov was one of many young people who decided to leave the government service during the years immediately after the war. Later he regretted that hasty decision. But at the time he was young and hoped to provide for himself "honest means of subsistence" and to get "independence from the whim of superiors."[7]

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[3] N. S. Leskov "Avtobiograficheskaia zametka," *Sobranie sochinenii v 11-ti tomakh*, t. 11 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1958): 11.

[4] V. Desnitskii "Predislovie," Andrei Leskov *Zhizn' Nikolaia Leskova* (Moskva: GIKhL, 1954): v.

[5] When he arrived in Petersburg in January 1861, he visited T. G. Shevchenko and next month was present at this great writer's funeral. His article "The last meeting and the last parting with Shevchenko" (*Russkaia rech'*, 1861, nos. 19-20) was one of his first publications in the capital. One of his last works "Hare's fine. Observations, experiences, and adventures of Onopry Peregud from Peregudy" is coloured with Ukrainian soft humor. In February 1895, several weeks before his death, Leskov received a final refusal from *Vestnik*

After seven years of arduous work, Leskov suddenly left Kiev, his office, and promising career and started to work in a private business of another of his uncles (by marriage), an Englishman by birth, Alexander Scott. This new commercial firm "Scott and Wilkins" ran a business all over Russia, so that Leskov had to travel a lot. Three years were spent in constant traveling on company business, in thousands of encounters with people, often with the *Raskol'niki*. The knowledge and experience acquired during those years would be used during the writer's long life. "The owners of the firm were inexperienced people... and spent those brought over here capitals with the most stupid self confidence." Finally, the firm was ruined, Leskov lost his job, and once again arrived

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Evropy to publish this story. M. M. Stasiulevich, the editor of the journal was afraid of censorship. So the story was first published in 1917.

[6] N. S. Leskov "Vladychnyi sud," *Sobranie sochinenii,* t. 6 (Mokva: GIKhL, 1957): 90.

[7] N. S. Leskov "Zheleznaia volia," *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 6, p. 8.

in Kiev. After a short return to government service, his life underwent another sharp change: he decided to become a writer.

He joined the ranks of Russian men of letters in the early sixties and quickly grew into a notable figure in the world of Russian journalism. He arrived in Petersburg in January 1861, and on one of his first days there he was introduced to A. I. Nechiporenko, a member of the clandestine organization *Zemlia i volia* (Land and Freedom).[8] For a short while Leskov was quite close to radical circles. A. I. Benni, who also was in contact with the "Londoners" and later was exiled from Russia for these connections, lived in his apartment. Leskov started to work in a liberal *Russkaia rech'*, but very soon quarreled with its owner, countess Salias de Tournemire and had to part with this organ.[9] Together with Serno-Solovievich, Shchapov, Shelgunov, Yeliseev, and other radicals he participated in the creation of the short-lived weekly magazine *Vek* (The Age). But Leskov's passion for radical politics was short-lived. His relations with the radical camp soured rather quickly.

There were two culminating points in Leskov's writing career. The first one was the scandalous success of his first novel *Nekuda* (No Way Out – 1864).[10] Like all other works of these first years, this book was published under the pseudonym—Stebnitsky. The novel was a venomous satire on radical circles. Only a year earlier, in 1863, Chernyshevsky published his *What is to be done?* that became a gospel for young educated Russians. Leskov's novel presented their new ideals with malicious irony. The novel was also a personal vendetta against former friends. Many leaders of the radical camp recognized themselves in the spiteful caricatures of the novel.[11] They craved revenge. Rumors were spread that Leskov was simply a traitor to the cause and his novel was written on police orders. One can perceive the essence of the attitude to Leskov in the following harangue from the article of the most popular radical critic, Dmitry Pisarev:

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[8] We have already mentioned Nechiporenko in this work. He was Kel'siev's acquaintance from the years of studies in the commercial school. Kel'siev stayed in his house when he illegally arrived in Russia. Nechiporenko was arrested and charged with connections with Londoners (Herzen and Ogarev). He fully cooperated with the authorities and gave away all his former friends. Leskov was one of those who were named by Nichiporenko.

[9] The reason for the discord was personal: Leskov was trying to separate from his wife, while the circle of the countess interfered and took her side. Political differences and accusations followed the personal ones.

[10] The second culmination was publication of his story *Lefty* (1881), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

> I am very much interested in the following two questions: 1) Can there be found in Russia a single magazine – other than *Russian Messenger* – which would dare print in its pages anything emanating from the pen of Stebnitsky and signed with his name? 2) Can there be found in Russia a single honest writer who is so careless and indifferent to his reputation that he would agree to work for a magazine, which adorns itself with the novels and stories of Stebnitsky? These questions are very interesting for a psychological test of our literary world.[12]

Indeed, Leskov became a pariah of the Russian literary world. As Pisarev predicted, he could not publish his works anywhere but in the notorious *Russian Messenger*. But the writer managed to gradually outgrow that stigma, broke up with Katkov's circle, and by the time of the next peak of his popularity, in the early eighties he was not associated with any camp. He created a niche for himself in the world of writing. He became an expert in church affairs, in popular religiosity, in icon painting – in all those subjects that seemed hopelessly outdated and were rarely discussed in the Russian literature of the nineteenth century. What changed in the early eighties? Why did Russian public suddenly develop an interest in these matters?

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[11] If one is to believe Leskov, who always asserted that he wrote nothing but the truth in this novel, it is clear that Leskov (Dr. Rozanov in the novel) helped Ivan Kel'siev (brother of Vasily Kel'siev, an idealistic student, in the novel – Persiantsev) in his clandestine connections with Old Believers. We are allowed only several short glimpses into the world of underground of the 1860s. As to the "revolutionary potential of the Old Believers," Dr. Rozanov was sobered when he learned that all copies of the *Bell* given to the *Raskol'niki* ended up at the bottom of the Moskva River; their religious leaders did that.

The 1880s have been known for a long time as a 'conservative decade' in Russian history. According to many accounts, the 1880s and 1890s were not very different from the 1840s, retaining the same stifling atmosphere. Following Lenin's gripping version, many scholars view this period as the time of "unruly, unbelievably senseless, atrocious reaction."[13] Indeed, the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881 shocked the public, and government's energetic campaign of suppression had got substantial support among the middle and upper classes of the society. All revolutionary organizations were swept away. Katkov and Pobedonostsev were dominant figures and symbols of these years. But can we even compare it with Nicholas I's reign? Some scholars expressed their doubts as to excessive reaction of this time. Linda Gerstein thinks, "the degree of abnormality of the 1880s has been distorted by liberal historians".

> The period was in fact a very normal one if one takes as a standard of normalcy the condition of most European societies at the time; it was a period of pluralism and intellectual diversity everywhere. The 1860s, that supposed high-water mark of Westernism, was in fact the most "abnormal" period in Russia in the nineteenth century. The domination of radical public opinion and of the notion that to be westernized meant to be radical was a distortion of European reality.[14]

Leskov's fate might serve as an illustration of this argument: the writer took a wrong ideological turn in his first novel and was crushed by the force of radical public

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[12] Quoted in: H. McLean *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and His Art* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1977), 137.

[13] V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, t.1, p. 267.

[14] Linda Gerstein *Nikolai Strakhov* (Cambridge, MA, 1971): 199.

opinion. During his best years he was dogged by financial problems, by loneliness, and by hostility of the press. Characterizing the situation with Russian literary criticism, he wrote in 1873: "We have offenders, not expounders."[15] In the same year, one of the critics praised Leskov's story *Sealed Angel* and wrote: "As to the form of the narrative, I would venture to tell a word of praise. I say, "venture," because Mr. Leskov has such literary reputation that to praise him takes courage of some kind."[16]

The eighties brought Leskov both financial freedom and freedom of expression. He was not an outcast anymore, even though the bitterness, the memory of the lost years always remained with him. He wrote with a characteristic stinging irony: "For twenty years I bore a scurrilous libel, and it marred for me not much—only one life."[17] Through all these years Leskov retained his interest in the Old Belief. On the face of it, this interest in the group of people desperately clinging to the past corresponds with the dominant image of the eighties as a grim, conservative decade, similar to the reign of Nicholas I. But let us see how Leskov's attitude was changing from 1860s into 1880s.

We have already mentioned that in the 1860s Old Belief happened to be one of the 'fashionable subjects.' As we learn from one of Leskov's first publications, for him interest in the schism was not a tribute to fashion but a long-standing devotion:

> The Gostomlia farmsteads, where I was born and grew up, were surrounded on all sides by large schismatic villages. There were Priestist and Priestless denominations there as well as two large villages of Christ's faith, out of which about twelve years ago people were constantly exiled to Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus. That awful time had a strong influence on my young and

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[15] Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 10, p. 357.
[16] Quoted in: Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 4, p. 544.

impressionable soul. I came to like the *Raskol'niki* with all my heart and sympathized with them totally. From that time my bond with the people of ancient piety originated; it was not broken off during the subsequent years, and was markedly resumed lately, when different talks about the schism started.[18]

The first part of the article appeared in 1863, before the publication of *No Way Out*, before Leskov's ostracism. He clearly states here that he does not adhere to any of the recent opinions on the Old Belief and cheerfully adds that his work will not be hampered if anything he saw or heard does not coincide "with considerations of Mr. Mel'nikov and his literary friends supporting him in the mischievously fickle journal *Northern Bee* or with conclusions of Mr. Shchapov and his literary friends supporting him in the seriously liberal newspaper *Contemporary Word*."[19] The tone of the article is light; one can feel that the author is young and hopeful. He does not need to join any camps, he even allows himself to joke about their publications.

The tone of the second part of this article is heavier. There, Leskov again clearly identifies two major approaches to the schism that are dominating the literature: the approaches developed by Shchapov and Mel'nikov. Leskov wants to adhere to neither one of them. He is especially critical of one Mel'nikov's short story *Grisha*. He deals with it in one sentence: it is "an outrage" and has absolutely no connection with the truth.[20] Shchapov is criticized for his bias and lack of impartiality. In the discussion of the question of approach to the schism, one can hear the echo of Leskov's disagreements

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[17] Quoted in: Andrei Leskov *Zhizn' Nikolaia Leskova* (Moskva: GIKhL, 1954): 178.

[18] N. S. Leskov "S liud'mi drevliago blagochestiia," *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (September, 1864): 25-6.

[19] *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (November, 1863): 6.

[20] Ibid., p. 26. This assessment shows Leskov's temperament and manners: he owed a lot to Mel'nikov, he admitted that he learned a lot from him, but he felt that Mel'nikov's characteristics were unjust and he expressed this opinion without any "softening" words.

with the radical camp. He warns against placing any political hopes on the *Raskol'niki* and reveals the following secret: the radicals themselves know they made a mistake, when they expected to strike a revolutionary union with the *Raskol'niki*, but are unwilling to admit this. They are unsure whether the time has come to tell the truth about the schism. Leskov sees in this a manifestation of the strong Russian bureaucratic tradition, of a "senile bureaucratic love to the office mystery, which seems necessary because of some special considerations."[21]

The frivolous tone of the first part gives way to serious attacks on one camp: Leskov is compelled to take sides. Later he will not even remember about his youthful acclaim for the third approach and will insist that he always followed Mel'nikov's view.[22] What Leskov meant, when he reaffirmed his closeness to Mel'nikov so many times in his later years, was his political agreement with Mel'nikov. Following Mel'nikov, Leskov always asserted that in order to overcome any problems with the *Raskol'niki*, the government should grant them complete freedom of worship. But this compliance was only in the sphere of government politics. For Leskov, who was often rebuked for his closeness to the conservative camp, this liberal opinion was a matter of personal defense against these accusations. As to his artistic and historical approach to the schism, it changed several times throughout his career, and in its main points it was quite different from the approach, which was developed in Mel'nikov's novels. It is important to clarify how Leskov's approach originated and what its peculiarities were.

The article under consideration, "With the People of Ancient Piety," as well as another one – "About the Old Believers' search for schools," was connected with an important episode in Leskov's biography. In 1862, a group of Petersburg Old Believers wrote a petition asking to establish schools for their children, who were usually taught at home or in skits. The petition explained that ideal schismatic schools existed clandestinely in Riga; therefore, it concluded, schools in Petersburg should be similar to this model. The Minister of Public Education wanted to send an official to investigate what kind of school existed in Riga. His first choice was, of course, P. I. Mel'nikov, the main authority on the matters of schism. But this candidature proved to be unacceptable since Mel'nikov was an official of another ministry (Internal Affairs), and his Minister, P. A. Valuev, was known to be an adherent of the concept of strong limitations of Old Believers' rights. To ask this minister to send his official for such a friendly mission was "inconvenient." So instead of Mel'nikov, Leskov was sent to Riga, even though he did not have the same amount of knowledge and practical experience in these matters, even though he was a journalist, not an official. What was so special about this mission?

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[21] Ibid., p. 40.

[22] Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 11, p. 36.

The Minister of Public Education was disposed to help the Old Believers and investigate the issue. But since the school in Riga was a clandestine one, the ministry could only send such a person whom Old Believers would trust. They certainly did not trust Mel'nikov, they were afraid of him. They did trust Leskov; they even asked specifically that he would be sent to Riga. "To you," they said, "we will give letters to such people who will show you everything, and you should bring truth to the minister; anyone else whom we don't know, we don't want, and he will not see anything."[23] Apparently, Leskov became a well-known person among the Old Believers in the capital, since he was invited to the meeting of representatives of different schismatic denominations that was called in order to discuss the problem of education and later was asked to go to Riga.

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[23] N. S. Leskov "Narodniki i raskolovedy," p. 41.

Leskov, with all his practical experience, approached the problem of Old Believer schools in a business-like manner. There are no mysteries in his descriptions of Old Believers, who even in this meeting about schools start by discussing differences in their beliefs. One can see that the author does not separate these men from other Russians. If they are different, it is only in one respect: they do not want to follow some authority in their connection with God. They take the responsibility and want to think and decide religious questions on their own. Maybe this is the reason they seem so lonely and lost. In effect, Leskov's approach to the schism is cultural and deeply conservative (in the classic, Burkian sense). He includes into his perception of Russianness all history of the Russian people. For him, the schism is "a great family discord."[24] Thus, he does not count the *Raskol'niki* out of the family. This is a marked difference with Mel'nikov, in whose books the separation of the *Raskol'niki* from the rest of the society is always emphasized. Leskov insists on the unity of the people.

This attitude is also conspicuous in another book, which Leskov's biographer Hugh McLean calls "one of the most original, and ultimately most successful enterprises of his career." It was written in the late sixties—early seventies, the worst years of Leskov's literary alienation. The book is called *Soboriane* (The Cathedral Folk); its main heroes are clerics of one provincial parish. Leskov once admitted that it was in part due to his artificial estrangement from the mainstream literary process that he turned to such inconspicuous, untimely themes as church affairs and icon painting. Apparently, Leskov attached great importance to this book: he placed it in the first volume of his collection of works (1889-1890), even though he had already outgrown the ideas expressed in this book. The image of archpriest Savely Tuberozov is at the center of the narration. Considering the warm, loving attention of the author to this personage, one can expect that Leskov will present Orthodox religiosity as an essence of Russianness.

But Tuberozov's ideal is not strictly religious, it is situated in the past. As a student, he bitterly sobbed when he returned to his home village and saw the destruction of the old wooden church and the construction of the new stone temple: "It is painful to see how old beams are chopped without a pity."[25] His most memorable words used on this occasion are: "May you, the Russian people... live in harmony with your old fairytale." What the old archpriest means by this "old fairytale" is unclear. Some scholars translate the Russian word "*skazka*" (fairytale) used in this sentence as "tradition." F. Wigzell writes: "I have adopted the rendering 'tradition'... despite the loss of tones of enchantment inherent in the Russian word *skazka.*[26]

However, the word *skazka* conveys not only tones of enchantment but also a tone of something warm, home spun, very personal. Tuberozov makes it quite clear when he speaks about the connection of these tales with the sound of knitting needles: "For you, needles of old ladies sound monotonously; but for me the spring of sweet tales is dropping from them!.. O, how I would like to die at peace with my old fairytale." One can hardly dream about dying at peace with the tradition, but everyone has some personal recollections or tales that are precious. They might be (or might not be) connected with

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[24] N. S. Leskov "Iskanie shkol staroobriadtsami," *Birzhevye vedomosti* (1869, no. 71): 2.
[25] Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii, vol. 4, p. 152.
[26] F. Wigzell "The *staraya skazka* of Leskov's *Soboriane:* Archpriest Tuberozov and Avvakum," *The Slavonic and East European Review* (July 1985, vol. 63, no. 3): 321.

the tradition as a whole. As to the archpriest Tuberozov, he certainly has some tales that are close to his heart. What are they?

Several scholars point to the similarities between Tuberozov's diary and Avvakum's *Zhitie* (*The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself*).[27] In fact, Avvakum was a very popular figure in the 1860s, when Leskov was writing his novel. In 1861, N. S. Tikhonravov discovered and published Avvakum's *Zhitie.* This publication became an important event in Russian intellectual life. The unforgettable figure of the ever-fighting archpriest excited Leskov. In the draft of the novel he incorporates, even pastes in, to be precise, long quotations from *Zhitie.* After telling the story of Avvakum's life, the author concludes that despite many learned attempts to reproach Avvakum, "it was the ignorant who kept his memory pure and preserved it until this day when one can freely admire the great spirit of this hot-tempered fighter."[28]

The author manifestly juxtaposed Avvakum, that 'hero of the Russian land" who tirelessly fought for the beliefs of the grandfathers to the enlightened radicals who want to subject their motherland to quick westernizing changes: "As long as Russian land is not tired of giving birth to these *heroes of scream and endurance*, let it be forgiven even for bearing all turncoats and traitors!"[29] To decipher who is meant by 'turncoats and traitors' is easy: there are several somewhat simplified images of either insidious or stupid radicals in the novel: Leskov still continued his polemics with the revolutionary camp.

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[27] See the abovementioned work of F. Wigzell and also: V. Gebel' *N. S. Leskov: V tvorcheskoi laboratorii* (Moscow, 1945): 134-36.
[28] *Neizdannyi Leskov,* p. 73.
[29] Ibid., p. 74.

All these pathetic passages as well as the sketch of Avvakum's life were excluded from the final redaction of the novel. There, the theme of the schism became secondary. The fight with atheism and also with apathy and disorder inside the church came to the fore. But still, many commentators agree that Avvakum is invisibly present in the image of Savely Tuberozov. Could there be anything common in the 'hot-tempered fighter' for the old faith and Savely, who, as a young priest, was sent to Stargorod "to counteract the schism." McLean surmises that Avvakum's figure was eliminated "because the paradox seemed too extreme of an Old Believer providing moral guidance to an Orthodox campaigner against the Old Belief."[30] It is clear that at first the figure of Avvakum was an inspiration for both, for the author and for the protagonist, Savely Tuberozov. But why was it dropped from the final version?

One scholar argues that Leskov was losing his fascination with the Old Belief; it was not a model of Russianness for him anymore.[31] But one could also argue that the inspirational image of Avvakum could create problems with censorship, and Leskov did have plenty of those while publishing this novel. Essentially, his view of the Old Belief did not change, the *Raskol'niki* were still members of the Russian family, whatever their faults. I would argue that Leskov did much more in this novel than pasting in a positive image of the schismatic leader. The whole foundation of the book is so profoundly conservative that one can assess it as an expression of the Old Russian traditionalist worldview.

Even though Tuberozov is trying to renew and invigorate the church life in Stargorod, he is closer to Avvakum than to such renovators as the revolutionaries. A. M.

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[30] McLean, *Nikolai Leskov*, p. 674.

Panchenko emphasizes that it would be wrong to understand the confrontation between "traditionalists" and "renovators" in the seventeenth century as a struggle between knowledge and ignorance. "This is the collision of intellect and spirit: for Simeon Polotsky, the most important thing is enlightenment, "superficial wisdom," for Avvakum – moral perfection."[32] We encounter the same antagonism in *Soboriane*: "enlightenment" of the revolutionaries against the spirituality of Tuberozov. The old archpriest simply represents the traditional system of values. Shchapov deemed it important and cited several Russian proverbs showing how valuable everything old was considered in medieval Russia. In a recent work, A. M. Panchenko demonstrates that even "renovation" needed a close connection with the past in the old Orthodox worldview:

> It is important to point out that "renovation" in ancient Russian understanding is not an "innovation," not an overcoming of the tradition, not a break with it. It was something very different from the patriarch Nikon's "novelties," against which the traditionalists rose. If one considers "renovation" as movement, this is the movement not only forward but also backward, constant looking back at the ideal, which is situated in the eternity and in the past; this is an attempt to come closer to the ideal.
>
> From the point of view of the Orthodox medieval Russian culture, man was also an "echo."[33]

This passage is important for understanding the secret of the relationship between Tuberozov and Avvakum. Of course, Avvakum cannot be called Tuberozov's prototype:

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[31] I. Z. Serman "Protopop Avvakum v tvorchestve Leskova," *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, vol. XIV (Moskva-Leningrad, 1958): 404-7.
[32] A. M. Panchenko *O russkoi istorii i kul'ture* (Sankt-Peterburg: Azbuka, 2000): 60.
[33] Ibid., 69.

Tuberozov was involved in the prosecution of the Old Belief, he is submitting to the church authorities. But, in the way explained by Panchenko, Tuberozov was an "echo" of Avvakum, because in him we see the reflection of the spiritual side of the Orthodox culture as opposed to the enlightenment of the radicals and to the mind-numbing conventionalism of the official church. His spiritual leadership can be seen even in his attempts "to counteract the schism."

We learn about this counteraction through the retrospective of short, often cursory entries in Tuberozov's diary. The diary provides the reader with the exact dates of the happening. Tuberozov arrived in Stargorod in 1833, so he had to participate in the persecutions of the *Raskol'niki* started by the government of Nicholas I in the late 1830s. At first, the young and idealistic priest received only reprimands for his efforts to put new heart into the fight against the schism. The first one followed quite naturally after the new priest wrote a letter to the consistory stipulating that consistorial instruction on dealing with the schism was not helpful. The second censure was issued for not supplying the consistory with denunciations of the Old Believers. To this one Tuberozov responded with a letter, in which he pleaded that nothing new was happening among the *Raskol'niki*, while clerics lived in such utter poverty that they could only survive by conniving with the *Raskol'niki* and getting bribes from them. The only way to start the fight, he concluded, was to remedy hardships of the church itself. These complaints were attended to fairly quickly: the author received a new reprimand and a warning and was summoned to the consistory to give a personal explanation.

For several years, all the efforts of the new priest were broken down by the indifference of his superiors and penury of his subordinates. He requested permission for an open debate with the *Raskol'niki*, but permission was denied. The consistory demanded new denunciations and Savely entered in his diary: " What are these denunciations for? What to wrap in them? As to my reasoning, my order does not allow me to write them."[34] His subordinates denounced him to the consistory for his refusal to go with the cross to the *Raskol'niki's* houses at the Easter day.[35] New reprimands and censures followed and wore out the honest priest.

One of the entries seems especially important for our investigation; it depicts the destruction of the Old Believer chapel. Tuberozov wrote:

> The spectacle was dreadful, indecent, and truly scandalous; in addition, as ill luck would have it, the iron cross broke loose from the dome and was hanging on the chains. As the hooks of the frenzied ravagers forced it to fall down, it fell suddenly and broke the head of a Yid, a fireman, causing his immediate death. Oh, how distressful it was for me to see all this: my God! At least they shouldn't have sent Yids to tear down crosses! In the evening, the people gathered around the ravaged chapel. Both their people and our church people were there, and for a long time everyone cried together sorrowfully, and finally even began to seek embraces and unions."[36]

It is significant for the author that "their people and our church people" were brothers; they forgot their discrepancies at the time of anguish. So Leskov is indeed quite different from all those who wrote about Old Believers in the 1860s and 1870s. He did not try to separate the *Raskol'niki* from the Russian people. Being an outcast, he had to find his own way, and he found it by turning to popular culture. Like Old Believers two centuries before him, Leskov was truly frightened by the destruction of traditional principles of life, by the slighting attitude toward the Russian past. That is why his position in the discussion of the schism is a peculiar one: he refused to see the *Raskol'niki* as the Other. Instead, he studied old popular stories and songs and embraced the two-hundred-year old world and incorporated it into his stories. By the force of his talent, Leskov reunited the Russian people.

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[34] N. S. Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, p. 32.

[35] To go with the cross to the Old Believers at such a day simply meant to collect money from them: the *Raskol'niki* paid off in order not to let "apostates" in. For the parish clergy, it was a means to ease their financial difficulties. For Tuberozov, to collect money at people's gates as alms was shameful.

At the beginning of his career he refused to separate Old Believers from the rest of the people as members of the family, even though for a while his view of them was quite negative.[37] By the 1880s, he developed a special vision of these people, very much in the spirit of *long-durée* history. When describing a pilgrimage of several workers, which they undertook in the 1860s, he wrote: "Our commoner is the same man as he was before Peter the Great. Not only does he think in the same way and believe in the same way, but he also *sees* the same things that his forefather saw everywhere, and that we, even if we glance at every side, will never see."[38]

The work in question here is the history of a real religious movement that developed among the workers of St. Petersburg in the 1860s and was described by Leskov in the sketch published in 1881. The founder of the movement, the hero of the sketch *Obnishchevantsy* (The Pauperized) was born into an Old Believer family, and considered himself "a firm Old Believer," but never had any clear notions about the Old Belief. He was not familiar with the historic causes of the church schism or with the

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[36] Ibid., p. 33.
[37] It can be seen in the first version of the *Soboriane*, where the contemporary life of a provincial Old Believer community is described.
[38] N. S. Leskov "Obnishchevantsy," *Rus'* (1881, no. 16): 22. The italics are in the original.

discrepancies between numerous denominations of the religious dissent. He did not want to know all this. His goal was to create "the middle faith" and to unite everyone in all-triumphant love for God. We will consider all trials and tribulations of this new prophet later, but for now, it is very important to emphasize that this sketch was written and published at the very same time and in the very same journal as Leskov's main chef-d'oeuvre, his most famous story, that with years became the symbol of Russianness, *Lefty*. The comparison of two tales, one real, another imaginary, will help us to understand the following:

4.2 Why 'the Cross-eyed, Left-handed Gunsmith from Tula' is not a "National Problem"

"Leskov's *Lefty* as a national problem" is the title of the recently published article by A. M. Panchenko.[39] This scholar describes Lefty as a 'Russian tragic hero.' In his view, 'the tale of the cross-eyed, left-handed gunsmith from Tula is "the tale of Russian national degradation." To perceive the true meaning of this story is of essential concern to this project, since Leskov once commented: "Where I write 'Lefty,' one should read 'the Russian people.' His *Lefty* is a parable, a fable, a joke, which, in its own aphoristic fool's way touches all serious problems debated by Russian intellectuals during the nineteenth century. It might be interpreted differently in the light of another Leskov story, *The Pauperized*, the real-life sketch of religious inspirations and preparations for Doomsday. The pauperized are also taken as an integral part of the Russian people and they also fail. Why?

The comparison of these two works should begin with another discussion of the timing of their writing. Both were published in 1881, in the Slavophile journal *Rus'*. Russian literature suffered a great loss when Dostoevsky passed away in January 1881. This tragedy notwithstanding, literary life developed vigorously. There was something triumphant even in Dostoevsky's burial ceremony, reported an eye-witness; "we were glad to be able to express our respect to the favourite toiler of thought in the most open manner."[40] *Notes of the Fatherland*, the populist organ, continued to publish Engel'gardt's letters "From the Village," Zlatovratsky's articles, Uspensky's sketches of peasants' lives. All these were familiar and somewhat somber populist stories. The new energetic tone was set by Saltykov-Shchedrin's piercing account of his travels "Abroad." In the previous year (1880), one of the 'old Slavophiles,' Ivan Aksakov started to publish a new weekly newspaper, *Rus'*, with "Letters about the Russian peasantry" by Dmitry Kishensky, a polemic with *Notes of the Fatherland*. The dominance of populist writers over the world of journalism was crumbling. Together, such works as "Abroad" and "Lefty" (both published in 1881) were slowly destroying the habitual dead-serious populist tone of writing about the poor Russian people. The immense popularity of these two works signified a new step in the development of Russian self-perception.

Instead of grave accusations of the "rotten West" or complaints about peasant destitution, Leskov and Saltykov-Shchedrin were mocking both – Russia and the West—thereby destroying this traditional paradigm of Russian identity. In her perceptive book, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, L. Greenfeld characterizes the most important factor in the crystallization of Russian identity as "*ressentiment* – the existential envy of

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[39] Panchenko, *O russkoi istorii i kul'ture*, pp. 396-400.
[40] N. M. "Zapiski sovremennika," *Otechestvennye zapiski* (1881, vol. 52, no. 2): 243.

the West."[41] The sober irony directed at the Western values is so conspicuous in "Abroad" and "Lefty," that one can easily conclude: in the 1880s "the existential envy" was not at work any more. L. Greenfeld is right when she asserts that for many years, prosperous or rotten, the object of dream or disdain, the West was the significant other for the Russians. But it is hard to agree with her claims to have found and designated the exact time period when "Russian national consciousness *finally crystallized.*"[42]

Greenfeld presents the process of the formation of national identity as one complete project. In her view, Russians formed their identity by rejecting everything Western, since they "had few indigenous resources to provide them with building blocks."[43] By 1800, she claims, 'the matrix' of Russian identity was born and until 1917 it was "never essentially modified."[44] That is why L. Greenfeld is not interested in the Russian discourse of the end of the nineteenth century. Her analysis proceeds from Chaadaev and Slavophiles (1830s and 1840s) directly to Lenin and Blok (1910s). But this research would support the argument that 1880s were the time when 'the indigenous building blocks of identity' were used in Russia. In order to discover these attempts at building a modified identity, one needs to turn to popular literature. If not the West, what was now important for sustaining Russian identity? In order to answer this question, let us compare and analyze two stories by Leskov, dealing first with "Lefty."

Every Russian schoolboy knows "the tale of the cross-eyed, left-handed gunsmith from Tula and the steel flea." It is told by some obscure old gunsmith in a very peculiar language. The story begins with the travel of Tsar Alexander I around Europe after the

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[41] L. Greenfeld *Nationalism*, p. 250.
[42] Ibid. The italics are mine.
[43] Ibid., p. 254.
[44] Ibid., 260.

Vienna Congress. "He traveled through all the nations, and everywhere his friendliness always helped him to get into the most intimidating conversations with all kinds of people, and everybody would amaze him with one thing or another and try to win him over to their side."[45] But the Tsar is accompanied by the Don Cossack Platov, who does not even want to look at foreign wonders. He knows without seeing them that there is always something better at home. He proves this point to the Tsar when the English show them an incredibly beautiful pistol that their admiral brought from *Kandeliabriia*. The Tsar is impressed by the craftsmanship: "If only I had one such master in Russia, I would be so happy and proud, and make that master noble." Instead of answering, Platov pulls out of his wide trousers a special rifle screwdriver and, not paying attention to the Englishmen's protests, opens the pistol and shows the Tsar the following inscription inside: "Ivan Moskvin in the city of Tula."

Now the English need some revenge. Next day, their workmen present the Tsar with a microscopically small steel flea, which can dance "a whole cod drill in three fairiations." After that exhibition the emperor became absolutely convinced that "nobody could come up to the Englishmen in art" and turned a deaf ear to the arguments of his companion, Don Cossack Platov who averred that Russians "could make anything once they got a good look at it, only they did not have any useful training." But the tsar was not interested in this talk anymore, and the master from Tula, Ivan Moskvin, who was supposed to get noble status, was never summoned.

Soon even the steel flea is forgotten and later handed over as inheritance to the new emperor, Nicholas I who strongly believes that the Russians "are surpassed by no one." So, he orders this 'nimphusoria' to be given to Tula craftsmen "to ponder over it."

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[45] *Satirircal Stories of Nikolai Leskov*, p. 25.

The masters take the challenge, but what exactly they are going to do, they do not say. They have their own way of approaching the difficult task, and they respond to the Tsar's envoy, Platov:

> We feel the gracious word of the Emperor, and we never can forget it, because he puts his hope in his own people, but what we can do about it in this here case we can't just say in one minute, because the English nation ain't stupid either; they're even sort of cunning, and their art is full of horse sense. We mustn't go after them till we've pondered about it and got the God's blessing.[46]

Here we must stop and ponder how Leskov builds what he will call in the last lines of "Lefty" – 'the epos of workers.' The figures of Russian craftsmen are epic indeed. They have no airs about them, no false pride and no false humility. Unlike both Tsars, Alexander and Nicholas, they are not excited by the refinement of foreign skills. They are calm and full of respect for their own work and the work of their English counterparts. In order to get the God's blessing, they start their business with a pilgrimage. Three most skillful gunsmiths, "one of them a cross-eyed left-handed man with a birthmark on his cheek and bald spots on his temples where the hair had been pulled out when he was an apprentice," walk to the town of Mtsensk to bow to the ancient icon of Saint Nicholas, "awesome and most terrible" in appearance. After the journey, they lock themselves in Lefty's house and work several days in utter secrecy in order to uphold the Russian nation.

It goes without saying that they outdo the English; however, according to many commentators, the account of their accomplishment represents sad and subtle derision of the idea of Russian superiority. The Tsar is happy. "The rascals have taken the English flea and nailed flea shoes on its feet!" he says and kisses Lefty on the cheek. Lefty's own work, though, cannot be seen even in the most powerful 'nitroskop:' he made the nails fastening the flea's shoes. To the Tsar's question, what kind of a 'nitroskop' he used, Lefty answers: "We are poor people – too poor to own a nitroskop, so we just sharpened our eyes" (p. 42).

Lefty is sent to England with his marvel to surprise the Englishmen. They admire the lefthander's workmanship, but are a little disappointed: the flea is too heavy with the shoes on and cannot jump or dance anymore. The Russian feat turns out to be harmful to 'the most accurate exactness' of the English masterpiece. When reminded of this oversight, the lefthander admits: "About this ain't no argument... we didn't get very far in book learning, but only faithfully serve our fatherland" (p. 45).

Even though the English try their best to convince the lefthander to settle in England, he yields to no persuasion. The remainder of the story depicts Lefty's sad fate upon his return to his fatherland. Traveling by sea, he befriends an English sailor, 'the thirst mate.' They make a drinking bet and both arrive in Petersburg drunk. While the English sailor is taken to the embassy and comforted, Lefty is thrown on the floor at the police station, robbed of his money, and then, after lying "on the cold depravement" for a long time, our hero is taken to the Public Hospital, "where everybody of unknown social class was taken in to die" (p. 51).

The story about the steel flea is full of jokes, humorous allusions, and short and sharp dialogue. A series of competition-anecdotes might be discerned in it, a number of short fragments, in which Russians compete or are being astutely compared with the English. For example, when the English present the flea to the Tsar, he gives them a

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[46] *Satirical Stories of Nikolai Leskov*, p. 32.

million as a reciprocal gift. Now he needs a case to bring this marvel home, but the English ask another five thousand for the special diamond case. It is more than Platov's generous Russian soul can bear (they took a million and now ask five thousand for the case, which should belong to the thing, anyway) and, without a word, he puts the 'nitroskop' into the pocket of his wide trousers, because it also belongs to the thing: one cannot see the flea without it.

Anecdote was once called "an atom in the nature of Leskov's stories."[47] Leskov was fond of anecdotes. "Nothing reveals a man as easily as his favourite anecdote," he wrote.[48] In a book called *Leskov and Popular Culture* A. A. Gorelov notes that two meanings of the word 'anecdote' are interwoven in Leskov's vocabulary: first, anecdote as a description of some historical incident, second – a joke, a micro-story. "Leskov tends to give to a historical legend the form of a joke, so a story about real incident is contaminated by anecdote."[49]

From the moment of its appearance, many critics were suspicious about "Lefty;" they blamed Leskov for being just a copyist of 'the famous folk tale.' A more than one hundred year search for the popular sources of this story was in vain. Now scholars agree that 'the tale of the cross-eyed, left-handed gunsmith' was *invented* by Leskov. Its only source the scholars agree upon was the Russian saying: "Tula-ites shod a flea." But even this three-word saying is ambiguous. Is it an example of a complicated but useless thing to do or glorification of Tula-ites art? The same ambiguity may be traced in the story about Lefty. Russians are often assessed as losers in this competition, because the flea cannot dance anymore. But if we approach the story as a joke, they definitely won. The meaning of the word 'podkovat'' in Russian is not only 'to shoe,' but also 'to cheat' 'to trick' someone.[50] In this sense, Russians are definite winners. But the story is not about winning or losing even though the comparison of the two countries is its constant feature.

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[47] Quoted in: A. A. Gorelov *N. S. Leskov i narodnaia kul'tura* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988):110.

[48] Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 6, p. 340.

The description of the life of English workers sounds like an 'other world' to Russia:

> Every one of their workmen was always well fed, none was dressed in rags, each one had on a capable everyday jacket and wore thick hard-nail boots with iron cups, so that he wouldn't stump his toes anywhere or anything. Along with his work he got teaching instead of beatings, and he worked with comprehension. In front of each one, hung up right in full view, was a stultification table, and within arm's reach was a racing slate.... And when a holiday came, they would all get together in couples, each one would take a walking stick in his hand and they would go for a walk in a proper way, all proud and polite.[51]

The writer does not even need to say it, everyone knows that in Russia workmen's life is different indeed: they are frequently hungry and beaten, wear rags, and do not get a proper education. They are humble and impolite. But author's attitude to them is not that ambiguous. It would be really hard to agree with L. Greenfeld and see these 'proud and polite' English workers, with 'stultification table' always in full view in front of them, as another object of 'the existential envy.' This description is rather the case of Russians' new ironic attitude to themselves and to their competitors, the sign of spiritual health and self-confidence.

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[49] Ibid., p. 111.

[50] V. I. Dal' *Tolokovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, t. 3 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo inostrannykh i natsional'nykh slovarei, 1956): 176.

[51] *Satirical stories*, p. 47.

One can hear the same tune in the book "Abroad" written by Saltykov-Shchedrin and published in 1880-1 in *Notes of the Fatherland.* The famous Russian satirist also compares Western and Russian ways of life. Saltykov's views on the Russian peasantry (and therefore Russia itself) are clearly outlined in the dialogue of two boys, German and Russian (the boy in trousers and the boy without trousers) included in the first chapter of the book.

From the words of the boy without trousers we learn about some features of the life in the Russian village: stealing, drunkenness, rudeness. He does not believe the fact that in Germany fruit trees grow along the road, and nobody picks the fruits but their owners. "Our people not only would pick all the apples, but even break all the branches," says the Russian boy with a note of pride, "uncle Sofron went near a tankard with kerosene the other day and had drunk it all."

-- Surely, he did it by mistake...

-- He had a hangover, but he did not have a penny, that is why he used kerosene.

-- Surely, he became sick, didn't he?

-- Of course, one will be sick, who was beaten by the village gathering.[52]

After listening to more of Russian boy's stories of hardships, the boy in trousers invites him to stay in Germany where life is so much easier. Instead of answering, the boy without trousers asks if it is true that the German sold his soul to the devil for a penny. The German boy explains that his parents had signed the contract and now they have a salary and inquires whether it is true that the Russian sold his soul for free. The Russian boy admits the fact, but sees only his advantage in this situation: "I gave it for free, so I may always take it back."[53] Although the Russian boy does not have even trousers, he finds the bizarre Russian way of life much more amusing than the German order. The 'contract' is unacceptable for him as a limitation of his freedom. Saltykov attempts to break the mythological shell in order to see and convey a real-life image of the Russian people. It is not his fault the image is not comforting. He can only grieve for the fate of this great country, which went through so many troubles:

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[52] M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 14 (Moskva, 1972): 36-7.

> ...appanage knife-fights, Tatars' yoke, Moscow ideals of statehood, and Petersburg's enlightening mischief and enslaving. It suffered so much, but remained mysterious, did not work out independent forms of community. Meanwhile, the most superficial glance on its map attests that without such forms only agonizing death awaits it in the future.[54]

At first sight, this quotation sounds as another juxtaposition of the rational West to mysterious Russia, which L. Greenfeld marks out as a characteristic element of the *ressentiment*. Only in this reasoning Russian mysteriousness is undoubtedly a burden. One of the objectives of the writer is to unveil this shroud of mystery and vagueness and to start constructing a definite image of Russia. If the Russian people did not soundly express themselves 'in independent forms of community', hundreds of years of suffering are to blame for this. Saltykov's approach is sober; one does not hear any hysterical notes that were characteristic, for example, for Dostoevsky, who asserted that Russian people found pleasure in suffering.

Leskov's "Lefty" is more than just a sober assessment of Russian suffering. It goes further than this. It is also an attempt (and a very successful one, considering the story's popularity!) to construct a new 'matrix' of Russian identity. Lefty is only one personage from Leskov's gallery of 'righteous Russian people.' The creation of the "positive type of the Russian man" might be considered the first step in such a matrix. Even if the starting point of this matrix is again the competition with the West, this is a competition of equals, and a lot of 'indigenous building blocks' are used in the construction. What are they?

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[53] Ibid., p. 39.
[54] Ibid., p. 165.

Of course, suffering plays its role as part of the Russian history; one can see it in Saltykov's work. Lefty's fate and the 'bald spots on his temples' are also quite telling. The next step for Leskov is refutation of mystery and creation of the saintly type of 'a simple man from the people.' In the refined work "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," Walter Benjamin emphasizes that Leskov's righteous man is "usually a simple, active man who becomes a saint apparently in the most natural way in the world."[55] He likens Leskov to a medieval chronicler, who does not explain the world, but follows a model. Benjamin makes a distinction between a historian and a chronicler:

> The historian is bound to explain in one way or another the happenings with which he deals; under no circumstances can he content himself with displaying them as models of the course of the world. But this is precisely what the chronicler does, especially in his classical representatives, the chroniclers of the Middle Ages, the precursors of the historians of today. By basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation—an inscrutable one—they have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders.[56]

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[55] W. Benjamin "Storyteller," *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1968): 86.
[56] Ibid., 96.

So a profane storyteller who just relates the course of events without any explanation is similar to a chronicler for whom the course of events is eschatologically determined and does not require an explanation. Benjamin admits that it is hard to decide what constitutes the basis of Leskov's stories—religious or worldly outlook. If one considers this problem in the light of Leskov's interest in the Old Belief, the basis of his 'hagiography' is the Old Believer's model of the world. Having been inherited from Old Russia, then developed and supported by simpletons for two centuries in isolation from official culture, the schism produced its own unofficial saints and heroes. All Leskov's 'righteous people' are unofficial heroes, forgotten by the authorities. Their exceptional kindness, patriotism and naiveté are especially revealing in connection with the fact that they are consigned to complete oblivion by their authorities. This absolute gap between the popular and the official spheres is also part of the myth created by Leskov.

One can see it in another story written in the same year—*The Pauperized*. The story starts with an epigraph from Dostoevsky: "One should trust our people, they are worth such trust." Supported by Dostoevsky's huge moral authority (remember, Dostoevsky died only several months earlier), Leskov begins with the assurance that Dostoevsky had in mind **all** Russian people, factory workers not excluded. One can see here, again, how Leskov, all odds notwithstanding, wants to unite the Russian people. Old Believers? Yes, they are part of the family. Factory workers? They are also ours. They were only slandered by the radical camp (in Leskov's words, "a false literary school"), which "for more than twenty years dresses our fabric worker in the fool's cap of a revolutionary clown." So on the very first page the Russian people are united and juxtaposed to the radicals. What is the nature of Russianness represented here by the group of factory workers, who are considered to be inseparable from the Russian people? The emphasis is the same one that we encountered in the approach to Old Believers: their culture is highly valuable, because it is kept unchanged from the pre-Petrine times.

The hero of this sketch is a prophet. He is the religious leader of a group of factory workers in Petersburg, Ivan Isaev, or Isaich. Apparently, Leskov not only knew the prophet personally, but also was entrusted with his writings: there are a lot of quotations in the sketch. As we have already mentioned, Ivan's goal is to find the 'middle faith' in order to save everyone. At the age of seventeen, he had several powerful visions, which persuaded him that God had chosen him to teach people and to unite them in the true 'middle faith.' He decides to begin with the comparison of the existing creeds. He started his search in the late 1850s, and competent people at his provincial factory advise him to go directly to Petersburg; this 'noisy desert' is now the best place to hide for the dissenters. In general, the competent people say, to look for the true faith is the righteous deed, only it is difficult, because "the police do their best to prevent simple people from open discussions about faith."[57] There are no bad feelings toward the police in their words, only complete alienation. Again, we see how the world of officialdom is alien and hostile to the world of popular religion.

We can see here why Old Believers are important for Leskov's project to unite the Russian people: they are the keepers of the tradition. In the foreword to "Lefty" it is said that 'an Old Believer gunsmith' told the story to the author. When Ivan Isaev has a revelation about the coming Doomsday, he needs a consultation on the exact date. The only people who would know the exact dates are Old Believers, because the state confused the system of chronology by several changes. Finally, with the help of the Old

Believer *Petrovich* and also with the help of his own visions and revelations, Ivan Isaev decides to wait for the final judgment on the Easter Day of 1861. Even though Isaev does not agree with the Old Believers on many points, he goes to them for consultation and he shares with them vivid apocalyptic feelings.

Leskov stresses again that some spiritual features of the Russian people have been left "in their full inviolability" since the Petrine times. Old Believers are not welcome at Isaev's sermons and discussions, because they ask too many questions. Their mind develops in inter-denominational arguments and refutations, while Isaev's aim was not discussion but unification. He started his propagation by condemning beard shaving, and this, Leskov claimed, was the last tribute to his origin and an important means to connect with his audience. Apparently, the aversion of a Russian commoner to "the lascivious scraped mug" (*bludodeinoe skoblenoe rylo*) was so strong, that "two hundred years of the new custom could not exterminate the old taste."[58] Having started with beards, Isaev continued in quite a Protestant way proclaiming the Gospel the only source of his creed. When he discovered that the Doomsday is near, this teaching became 'the true middle faith' he was looking for. Now he and his followers needed only to prepare for the event.

Once, in the beginning of 1861, when Isaev read Apocalypse, about the seven seals, "there was a sudden bright light in his mind:" he realized that seven seals are seven years in power of Alexander II. Existence of the world should come to an end with this Tsar: what could be better than giving freedom to this vast country? Again, Leskov notes the immutability of Russian popular culture. Russian people, he writes, keep "the ability to implicate God in Russian affairs in the most spontaneous way. Only under Peter the

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[57] N. S. Leskov "Obnishchevantsy," *Rus'* (1881, no. 16): 21.
[58] Leskov "Obnishchevantsy," *Rus'* (1881, no. 18): 15.

Great they were waiting for Christ with thunder on the cruel emperor, and under Alexander II – with the halo of immortality."[59]

There are two emphases in this sketch that require recognition. The first one is cultural and historical unity of all groups of the Russian people, their religious discrepancies notwithstanding. The second is the juxtaposition of this popular world to both, the official world and the world of radicals. Neither government, nor the revolutionaries understand the commoners. The government is afraid of the "dangerous factory element;" the radicals strengthened their socialist propaganda, while this 'restless factory rabble' consumed with the impulse to Evangelical perfection. When the day of the end of the world became known to the Isaev's followers, they decided to "prepare," to give out everything they had, up to the last garment. The rabble "wanted to give out its own, while [the radicals] wanted to teach it to divide somebody else's."[60]

Certainly, Leskov's sketch is conducive to understanding of the commoner: its main source is Isaev's writing, which gives the reader direct access to the laboratory of the popular thought, to the world of popular feelings. What does the author stress here? First of all, kindness and delicacy. No harm was done to Isaev by his destitute followers when Easter came and there was no sign of God in Petersburg streets. Isaev's followers kept silence, since they did not want to embarrass him. In passing, Leskov recalled how he once accompanied a member of Petersburg's highest circles, a prince, to one of the dirtiest taverns in Moscow. It was the place where dissenters from the people would gather once a week to discuss spiritual questions. The prince was introduced to them, but his name and title did not hamper the discussion. The gentlemanly ways of these commoners stunned the prince. On the way home, he suddenly exclaimed: "Where have we been? I have not encountered such gentlemen in all my life!"[61] This delicacy and calm assurance are the very same features we find in Lefty and his artisan-friends. But in this particular case, in the case of dissenters, these features are clearly the consequence of years of dissent, of constant disagreements with the authorities, of a habit to look for one's own solutions to every problem. To conclude, by the 1880s, the *Raskol'niki* were used as the basis of Leskov's model of Russianness. Their worldview was the background of many of his stories, especially the stories about "the righteous Russian people."

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[59] *Rus'* (1881, no. 19): 21

[60] Leskov, "Obnishchevantsy," *Rus'* (1881, no. 18): 17.

We should not interpret Leskov's writings as a conscious attempt at creating the model of Russianness. It was a byproduct of his unremitting interest in the past. Leskov certainly did not formulate any program or lead any school of thought. Although he was widely read, his literary reputation was somewhat tarnished and he was perceived by many critics as an average writer. Often he had to work hard for mere survival. During the years of alienation he elaborated his own cultural-historical approach to the Russian people. The history of the schism, of the "ancient piety" was an important part of his perception. But he also developed several images of others: the unification, the new understanding of Russianness could not be complete without the figure of the Other. One of this attempts I will consider in the next study.

4.3 Leskov's Images of Jews in Late Nineteenth Century Russian Discourse: Attempt at Allocation

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[61] Leskov "Obnishchevantsy," *Rus'* (1881, no. 21): 12.

The history of Russian perceptions of and attitudes toward the Jewish people in the late nineteenth – early twentieth century is full of moving, controversial, and disgusting stories. The Jewish question gradually becomes a burning topic in Russian discourse, especially after the Great Reforms. Therefore, these discussions of the Jewish question coincide with the rapid social, cultural and political changes, which undermined the system of traditional Russian national values. The drama of this history reveals itself in two significant events. First, there is the *Illustratsiia* affair of 1858, so vividly described by J. D. Klier in his informative book *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881*. In 1858, the Russian intelligentsia decisively and almost unanimously repulsed the anti-Semitic escapades of the *Illustratsiia* newspaper. The second is the notorious Beilis affair of 1911-1913, when bacchanalia of ritual murder accusations and other anti-Semitic attacks shook Russia. The time interval between these two events may be characterized by the growing conservative Judeophobia of the 1870s and the pogroms of the 1880s, which appalled the intelligentsia.

To demonstrate that some change in public opinion was taking place, we will point to a typical figure, D. I. Ilovaiskii. The popular historian (several generations of Russian children were using his textbooks) confessed in his notorious "Moscow Letters about the Jews" (1890) that in 1858 "it was only by chance" that he did not sign the protest against *Illustratsiia*.[62] Apparently, he was going to. According to Ilovaiskii, those were the times of "lofty aspirations" and "naive enthusiasm," when to protest seemed so easy and noble, when the ideas of liberation of all the suffering and the oppressed came to the fore. Jewish people "totally unknown to the Russian intelligentsia of that time" were seen as the most oppressed. Ilovaiskii himself changed his position after extensive travels in the Western provinces. The Russian public, he claimed, must have changed its opinion after 1865.

"Moscow letters about the Jews" draw a sullen picture of Moscow life at the 25th anniversary of the law of 28 June 1865, the law, which allowed Jewish artisans to leave the Pale. The result of this law, according to Ilovaiskii, was "the jewification of Moscow" (ozhidovlenie Moskvy). Metaphors of this historian turned publicist spoke for themselves: "Jewish hordes," "termites," "a sore," "a stone in the social stomach." All this nastiness proved to be pure anti-Judaism. In fact, Ilovaiskii mused on what a wonderful race could emerge out of the blending of Russians and Jews:

> On the one side, we have an excessive inertness, simple-heartedness, and unconcern; on the other – an excessive, restless liveliness and awfully developed abilities to exploit. The middle would be exactly what is needed for the prosperity of the country. Talented, enterprising Jewish tribe would infuse a new stream into the Russian organism, the stream, which would give a strong impetus to its further development. This is why I always look with special pleasure at the Jews who adopted Orthodoxy... The Jew, who adopted Orthodoxy, merges with us; his children will be completely Russian. This is enough. In a word, we should encourage the conversion of Jews into Orthodoxy by all means.[63]

Nobody would have dared to publish such musings in the early sixties. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was getting worse. Was it some sharp internal

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[62] D. I. Ilovaiskii *Melkiia sochineniia, stat'i i pis'ma* (Moskva, 1896): 82. "Moscow Letters about the Jews" were originally published in several installments in 1890 in *Novoe Vremia*, the most popular Russian newspaper of that time.

[63] Ilovaiskii *Melkiia sochineniia,* p. 92.

political change or external influence that made the widespread anti-Semitic outcry of 1911-13 possible? Or did some deep popular ambiguity toward the Jews always exist as an undercurrent and potential influence in educated Russian society? This study does not claim to give a direct answer to those grave questions, but takes a sideline approach to the matter. We will analyze only the works of Leskov, who "did not write about a peasant, a nihilist, a landowner, but always about a Russian man, a man from this particular country."[64] Most of his 'Jewish' stories were published in the late 1870s and early 80s, precisely the time when significant changes occurred in Russian public opinion.

In addressing the problem of Leskov's attitude toward the Jews, we are not stepping on some untrodden path. Hugh McLean devoted a chapter to this problem in his monumental book *Nikolai Leskov: the Man and his Art* (1977). McLean conceptualizes Leskov's spiritual life as a constant tension between "two opposing religious mentalities: his mother's ritualistic and magical, Orthodox; and his father's rationalistic, moralistic, incipiently Protestant."[65] After analyzing six stories where Jewish questions or Jewish images are present, McLean stresses Leskov's ambiguity, his constant wavering between "liberal or Christian ethics" and "anti-Semitic impulses." The last story, "The Tale of Theodore the Christian and his friend Abraham the Hebrew", written under the influence of Lev Tolstoy, is the only one that can be characterized without any doubt as liberal in its perspective. In McLean's view, it demonstrates the final victory of the "moralistic Protestant" side in Leskov.

This study will argue against the broadly accepted notion of anti-Semitic character of several of Leskov's stories. And since we approach these stories as the works of "the most Russian" writer, our emphasis is quite different: Leskov's ambiguity on the Jewish question simply reflects the ambiguity of popular beliefs and opinions. Leskov confessed once that imagination was his weak point, he mostly wrote down what he saw. His rural childhood and numerous travels in provincial Russia gave him his material, influenced his world outlook. "One simply has to know the people as his own life, not by studying it, but by living it. This is how I, thank God, knew it." The commonplaceness of his dialogues and descriptions is especially important for our investigation. And here, again, I follow the broadly understood Bakhtinian tradition, which suggests that literary works can be studied as forms of social knowledge.

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[64] M. Gorky *Istoriia russkoi literatury* (Moskva, 1939): 276.

This is why we cannot discuss "The Tale of Theodore and Abraham". If other works are written *about* simple people *for* the educated audience, the story about Theodore and Abraham is intended as a fable, a precept *for the simple people*. It is the story where Leskov discloses his convictions, whereas in the others he reproduces common opinions. "Theodore and Abraham" should be kept in mind as a certain boundary: in 1886 Leskov wrote a moralistic fable about the friendship of two boys, the Christian and the Jew. In a letter to V. G. Chertkov (1887) the writer clearly stated his intentions:

> A child (the people is a child, and a wicked one) has to be taught many useful notions: not to bite his wet-nurse's breast and not to burn a finger, and afterwards, not to destroy bird-nests and not to touch a breast of a young housemaid. These

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[65] H. McLean *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and His Art* (Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1977): 11.

> different things are in the same spirit and lead to one goal – education of a soul. ... My task is... to get the muzhik to think about a Yid for at least one minute.[66]

Leskov's stories concerning the Jewish question neatly fall into a ten-year time span. The first one, *Episcopal Justice*, was written in 1877, the last one in 1886. But Leskov's involvement in Jewish affairs started much earlier: from 1850 to 1857, nineteen to twenty five years of age, he served as a minor clerk in the army recruitment office in Kiev. Those were the times when the notorious military *kantonist* system was still in place. Jewish boys were to start their service in the Russian army at the age of twelve in some remote military camps, far away from the Pale. Not many of them survived the torment of leaving the parents, long journey, military training, and forced baptism. The cries of anguish as well as attempts at bribery and deception were part of everyday routine in Leskov's office.

This atmosphere serves as background to his first "Jewish" story *Episcopal Justice*, which Hugh McLean called ambiguous. The subtitle of the story is *from the recent recollections*; the author tells it in the first person singular, and gives exact family names of his superiors and acquaintances. He enjoys recalling the days of his youth in Kiev. At first, though, he sounds a little defensive, when he has to give the particulars of his job:

> There was no time, no means, no wish to judge, to discuss, or to intercede for the weak even when seeing the most obvious oppression. Yes, it was not a slip of the tongue: there was not even a *wish*, because all feelings became dull in this sea of moans and tears, in which I spent so many painful days of my youth, and if sometimes a weak compassion was stirring, it was instantly suppressed by the

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[66] N. S Leskov *Sobranie sochinenii v 11ti tomakh*, t. 11 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1958): 328-9.

> sense of absolute impotence to help to this awful, heart-rending grief of the whole crowd of howling near the walls of the office mothers and side-curls-tearing fathers.[67]

And further the author related the case, which drove him out of this bureaucratic stupor. If the author was really trying to "assuage the lingering hard feelings of guilt" as some scholars suggest, why do those "howling mothers" and "side-curls-tearing fathers" sound so condescending? It grows even more suspicious when the author reveals his disgust towards his visitor, an old Jew, whom he calls *zhidok*. This pitiful figure is "all wet, in frosted rugs, but with sweating face and a black mane sticking to it, with bulging eyes, which expressed fear, hopeless despair, passionate love and selflessness without any boundaries."[68] And he stinks. Several times this Jew is compared with some animals: when two soldiers hold him not allowing him into the office, he "writhes and beats shrinking as a snail and wriggling as a grass-snake," then he "rages ahead like a cat" and *poshel kozliakat'* (starts jumping like a goat), when left alone, he calms down and starts to look around like a wolf in a cage. And later he sleeps in Leskov's room together with his dog. Anti-Semitic motifs are definitely employed here, McLean thinks, this Jew does not look human.

What is his problem? Apparently, his seven-year old son has been taken for the conscription as if he were a twelve-year old. The Jew finds a way out: he sells everything he has, takes a huge loan and hires another Jew to go to the army instead of his son (this was the law: a Jewish boy could be substituted but only by a Jew of the full legal age). But suddenly, on the way to Kiev, the hireling disappears. He races to Kiev in order to be baptized. This way he can keep the money of the bookbinder and also receive another sum for the conversion provided by some pious ladies, plus he will not need to go to the army, because, as a Christian, he cannot be a substitute for a Jewish boy. So our bookbinder loses everything he had **and** his precious son.

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[67] N. S. Leskov "Vladychnyi sud," *Sobranie sochinenii v 11ti tomakh*, t. 6 (Moskva: GIKhL, 1957): 92.
[68] Ibid., p. 100.

And here we come to the culmination. When the bookbinder's tale is finished, clerks realize why the Jew and his papers are so stinky. Only once in my life, says Leskov, I saw *bloody sweat* with my own eyes, "and it is inexpressibly terrible." And this bloody sweat completely transforms the image of the old Jew. He suddenly becomes "a bloody, historic symbol," some mystical reminder of another Jew, who died on the cross. Especially because he is calling for that Jew in his awful mix of Hebrew, Ukrainian and Yiddish. "O, Ieshu, he cried, Ieshu Ha-notsri! He wants to deceive you! Don't take this laidak, mishiginer, rascal! O, Ieshu, why would you need such a rascal!"

This story was called anti-Semitic at worst, ambiguous at best, but I would argue that it is neither of the above. We have to understand this tale as a reminiscence of one's happy youth and satire of the Kievan society of that time. It is almost a bureaucratic folklore. Yes, the author speaks ironically about the Jew, but he also speaks ironically about himself and about absolutely everyone in this tale, especially about his fellow-clerks. If we only compare the figure of the Jew with other personages of this story, be it a stupid and pious governor's wife giving money to the Jewish converts or Leskov's own former superior, a "dried-up formalist," who dearly loves only his lap-dog ("he kissed it right into the snout; worried when it seemed sick, and gave it a cleansing enema with his own hands," but when he recruited under-age Jewish boys, he never "revealed weaknesses of a compassionate heart"[69]), the old bookbinder rises as an emblematic figure of utter suffering. Everyone who meets him is deeply affected by his tragedy. Leskov's servant says: "All his inside is twitching, as if on elastic, in the middle of him."[70] (V seredke u nego tochno vse nutro na rezine dergaetsia.)

The story could have a happy ending, because Filaret, the metropolitan of Kiev, interfered and helped the Jew. The metropolitan ordered to send the deceiver to the recruitment office, because "he is not worthy of baptism." The Jewish boy returns to his father, but a busy bureaucrat, Leskov does not have time and does not allow his reader to enjoy this joyful scene. Instead, he concludes the story with an epilogue in which he meets the same Jew several years later. He recognizes his old acquaintance in a bookbinder, which he meets in a bookstore. But how different is his figure now! A gray-haired *old man*, quiet and mild in appearance, enters the shop. Leskov italicizes the word 'starik' (old man) as if he wants to emphasize not only the aging of the personage, but also his humanity, which seemed so questionable in the beginning of the story. Moreover, *the old man* is now a Christian. Does he look so humane now, because he is converted to Christianity? Rather, we encounter a motif, which is quite habitual for Leskov: suffering elevates his heroes. It turns out, that the bookbinder's son was so shaken by the whole experience that he died; his mother followed him soon. Suffering ennobled the old bookbinder. In a way, it is suffering and social inequality that makes images of Old Believers and Jews similar.

Next, let us look at some other relevant works that Leskov was writing at approximately the same time. In 1879 he wrote a series of sketches on Jewish faith and rites. He notified S. N. Khudekov, the publisher of *Peterburgskaia Gazeta* before sending this work: "I think this is very interesting and responds to the recent increase of attention to the Jews. There will be 10-12 sketches and, of course, all of them will be quite new for our public. They will also be as cheerful and kind as possible. This is the best way." [71]

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[69] Ibid., p. 90.

[70] Ibid., p. 119

We can see that Leskov started to explore Jewish tradition quite thoroughly when we read another story *The Melamed of Osterreich* (1878). This time the narrator is a Russian officer (a major) and he is telling the story to his subordinates. McLean finds his attitude toward Jewish religiosity "disdainful," his descriptions—"mocking and ironic." To give proofs to this statement, he cites the following account:

> When [Skharia, the *melamed*] prayed, he always straightened out his legs in the first position, rocking and shaking without sparing his knees so that angels would see how fear made him tremble before the Omnipresent One. He first shouted his prayers in Hebrew and then dispatched special prayers in Syrian and Chaldean so that the angels, who do not understand these languages, would not be envious of his requests from the coming Messiah. Even more subtle care was required against the devil, lest that intriguer should get wind of Skharia's requests and do him an injury. But that was taken care of: the devil could never find out what Skharia was asking for because the devil also does not know Syrian or Chaldean and can never learn these languages because his "swinish" pride does not allow him to study from human beings. If Skharia chanced to spit during his prayers, he performed this impolite act not otherwise than to the left, so as not to bespatter the crowd of angels admiring him from the right.[72]

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[71] Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 10, p. 473.
[72] Quoted in: McLean, *Nikolai Leskov*, p. 421.

McLean admits that such thorough knowledge of Jewish religion indicates "a good deal of research" on the author's part. But it is hard to agree that all this research and author's "serious interest" are realized only as a mockery. Yes, Leskov is ironic as usual, but in his descriptions of Skharia's day-to-day communications with the deity, his irony mellows. It is certainly not mocking. Rather, in these lines an attentive and benevolent narrator replaces the tough Major Pleskunov. Could the major say: "It seemed Skharia and the sky itself whispered to one another." Skharia is close "to the sky," and only such a perceptive narrator as Leskov could have noticed this. The image of the out-and-out rogue Skharia is touching in its loneliness and its exposure to so many hostile forces. All those seemingly trifle rules and rites that guide Skharia in his life are simply parts of a major defense line that he erected between himself and the evil. This defense line is his religious law:

> Experience had taught Skharia how nice it is to live by "the Law." He even slept by "the Law." For this he always lay down on the same left side that Isaac lay on when Abraham wished to stab him to death as a sacrifice to God. And that is how Skharia always slumbered as ready sacrifice. And in order to liken himself even more to Isaac, Skharia always slept naked, without a shirt, and on a bed having its head inevitably turned southward, while its legs were facing north.[73]

In 1882 he published *Yid Somersault,* the most anti-Semitic story, according to McLean, and in 1883 baron De Ginzburg, a wealthy Jewish merchant, commissioned him to write a polemical pamphlet about the Jews in Russia intended for the presentation to Pahlen's commission, which was convened for discussing the Jewish question. If the

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[73] Leskov, "Rakushanskii melamed," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, t. 14 (S-Peterburg: Izdanie A. F. Marksa, 1903): 140.

Jewish community considered Leskov an anti-Semitic author, Ginzburg would have never entrusted him with such an important task. This pamphlet was published in 1884 in fifty copies, strictly for official purposes. William Edgerton calls it "possibly the most powerful defense of equal rights for Jews in 19th century Russia."

My argument proceeds by suggesting that some seemingly unimportant, fleeting images of Jews (in fact – personal recollections), appearing in those stories, not concerned with the Jewish question, are especially revealing. Rendering some impression from the past, the author cares less about being politically correct or recreating somebody's speech. So it seems that a girl dancing on stilts at the beginning of the *Islanders* or under-age Jewish conscripts from the *Musk-Ox* tell us more about Leskov's inner feelings than direct reasoning on his part. The Jews are not completely alien because they suffer as much as the Russians, probably even more.

In this sense, there is a striking parallel between Old Believers and Jews that was never stressed in scholarly literature. How does Leskov motivate his interest in the Old Belief in his first article on the subject? He starts with the childhood memories and recalls how he pitied those *Raskol'niki* who were persecuted and exiled. A very similar reminiscence, only more ambiguous, is contained in an unpublished sketch, which was cited in the book of Leskov's son. In this excerpt, Leskov and his brother go out of the house in winter hoping to be the first to meet their English relatives (Leskov's aunt was married to an Englishman). But instead, they bump into three beggars: a tall gray-haired old man, another one a little younger, and a woman. There is also a horse harnessed in the sledge and some rugs on the sledge from where some whine is constantly heard. The boys forget about the guests and want to help; they suggest that the beggars should get to the village to be helped. The tall old man disagrees: "No. They will not help *us*."[74] He gratefully declines all propositions of help by saying, that the boy is too young and does not understand who they are. "I know, you are convicts," the boy asserts, "but I want you to be warm." The rest of the story is telling:

> The old man shook his head and said, sighing:
>
> – You are mistaken, child, we are not convicts, but we are worse.
>
> I did not know yet what could be worse than convicts and said:
>
> – Does not matter, tell me who you are and I will pity you anyway.
>
> – We are *Yids*!
>
> At that time two other people also stopped and, sighing quietly, repeated:
>
> – Yes, *we are Yids*.
>
> I and my brother moved back—only now I understood the whine that was heard from the sledge covered with snow, and I realized the awful, threatening me danger: of course, there must be children there, whom these people stole somewhere and now hiding with them. That is why they prefer to be frozen to asking for a shelter. To be sure, now they will grab me in the same fashion and take me away from home, from my kin, and from the beautiful holiday of tomorrow...
>
> The awe raised my hair on end, and I rushed home with appalling cry, and having come home, fell down and for a long time could not tell anything to the worried by my fright parents. But finally they comforted me and I muttered: "There... near the spring... Yids... carry children... They wanted to take me..."[75]

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[74] A. N. Leskov *Zhizn' Nikolaia Leskova*, p. 64. The italics are in the original.

[75] Ibid., pp. 64-5.

This manuscript has neither beginning, nor end; it stops suddenly. But it is enough to perceive the child's dread of those people who were "worse than convicts." He promised to pity them anyway, but his superstitious awe appeared to be stronger than his pity. This boy, who knew peasants' life because he lived it, also inherited peasants' sincere belief that Jews steal Christian children and drink their blood.[76] That should explain his awe. But how did the pity prevail in his mature years?

Andrei Leskov, the writer's son thought that these childhood recollections made Leskov think, and during the years of writing career, they prompted him to defend rights of the *Raskol'niki* and of the *people of the Moses Law*. In one of his letters written in 1881 the writer insisted: "By my convictions, I do not belong to Judophobes."[77] It seems that Leskov's attitude to both Old Believers and Jews was largely motivated by the same feeling of pity to the persecuted.

To show how Old Believers were portrayed after Mel'nikov, we will consider only one example. M. Kuzmin and his story *Wings* are typical examples of the attitude of modernist authors to the Old Belief. Kuzmin himself was a very mysterious figure. He entered the circles of Russian modernists in Old Believer clothes. It was time of his fascination with the Old Belief; he lived among Old Believers for some time, studied their way of writing music. Many perceived him as an Old Believer. Later he became scandalously famous as "Russian Oscar Wilde" due to his sexual predilection.

The story, *Wings*, consists of three chapters. In the first one, the hero (an adolescent) comes from a small provincial town to Petersburg to live with relatives after the death of his mother. There, he is acquainted with Shtrup, a rich and clever foreigner. Two girls love Shtrup, but several personages hint that he cannot be interested. One of the girls commits suicide in Shtrup's apartment. In the second chapter the hero spends the summer in an Old Believer village on the Volga and discusses the peculiarities of the Old Belief with his hosts. In the third, he leaves Russia, travels abroad, and meets again with Shtrup. His 'wings' start to grow, it is a painful process, but he comes to realize the beauty of the homosexual love. Of course, this rendering of the story is rather schematic, but it reflects the role and place of the Old Belief in the story. The first and the last chapters are full of events. The plot hardly develops in the middle chapter. Old Belief is not a matter of interest; it is a distracting strange detail (not as queer as sexual orientation of Shtrup, but somewhat close).

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[76] We also hear echoes of such superstitions in *Soboriane*, where *prosvirnia* (an old woman, who makes communion bread for the local church) sincerely believes that all "Yids have tails." (Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 4, p. 102.)

[77] E. N. Akhmatova "Moe znakomstvo s N. S. Leskovym i ego pis'ma ko mne," *V mire Leskova*, p. 324.

CHAPTER V: THE IMAGE OF THE OLD BELIEF IN THE 1880S

At the beginning of the eighties some researchers estimated the number of religious dissenters at 13-15 million people.[1] According to the data of the Holy Synod, there were only one million dissenters, while in the 1860s in the documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs their quantity was assessed at about eight million. This number was constantly growing in the 1880s and 1890s. The question, 'why is the schism growing?' was turning into: 'why is the schism growing so fast?' At the beginning of the twentieth century the figure of 20 million was frequently mentioned,[2] but nobody was sure how accurate it was. This situation of disagreement and confusion about numbers is just the reflection of general confusion about the real role and meaning of the schism in the Russian history. It also reflects the misunderstanding between the three parties that were gravely interested in the proper assessment of this phenomenon: the church, the state, and the intelligentsia.

This last chapter will illustrate the lack of dialogue between these three agencies or, should we say, the stonewall that existed between them. The first part will show how frequently writers, composers, and artists were incorporating images of Old Believers in their works. If in the 1860s the *Raskol'niki* were a fashionable, even somewhat dangerous topic of scholarly and publicist discussions, in the 1880s they stepped into the pages of pulp fiction, into the canvases of famous painters, even into the opera! They seemed to be everywhere, but at the same time the church and the state were vainly trying to suppress this publicity. The first part of this chapter is a review of those popular images of the *Raskol'niki* that appeared in the 1880s; the second part is an attempt to explain the desperate and often inadequate actions of the authorities. On the surface, the situation looked hopeful: Alexander III was the first tsar to grow a broad and thick beard, exactly the way Old Believers liked it. In 1883, a law was passed to ease the conditions of the *Raskol'niki*. But in fact, fear and hatred still led the authorities in their dealings with dissenters.

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[1] Iuzov *Russkie dissidenty*, A. S. Prugavin "Raskol i ego issledovateli," *Russkaia mysl'* (1881, no. 2)

[2] A. S. Prugavin "Dva milliona ili zhe dvadtsat' millionov?" *Staroobriadchestvo vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moskva, 1904): 17. Prugavin published several articles in the 1880s where he demonstrated deficiencies of the official statistics. According to his estimate the number of *Raskol'niki* in the Perm region in the 1880s was about one million, but the official figure was 91,211 (ten times difference). See "Ural'skoe staroobriadchestvo," Ibid., pp. 26-7. This article was first published in 1884 in the newspaper *Golos*.

5.1 Old Believers in the Nascent Public Sphere

Studying the burgeoning mass-circulation press of the 1880s, L. McReynolds connects this development with the creation of the "public sphere" in Russia during those years.[3] One of the themes of her book is the fight for the influence between old politicized "thick" journals of the intelligentsia and new daily newspapers. It is hard to underestimate the influence exerted by the daily newspapers, from relatively highbrow liberal *Golos* (Voice) to unabashedly yellow *Moskovskii listok* (Moscow leaflet), which was intended for semi-literate merchants and artisans.

According to one memoirist, N. I. Pastukhov was the brightest figure among the editors of Moscow newspapers. A peasant by origin and a self-made man, Pastukhov used to say, "I am my own ancestor." During the 1860s, Pastukhov owned a tavern in Moscow, then became bankrupt, and started to work as a reporter. In 1881, he founded his own newspaper, *Moskovskii listok*, which was always the first to report the hottest news.

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[3] L. McReynolds *The News under Russia's Old Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991): 3-4.

> An illiterate editor on the background of illiterate Moscow that understood and loved this man, because he was able to speak its language. This illiterate editor trained [Russian public—E. K.] to read his illiterate newspaper and thereby made everyone literate, he trained... a shopkeeper, a cabman, a frequenter of taverns, a peasant to read. He is the one who showed which newspapers will be accessible to the people and captivating.[4]

There was a section in *Moskovskii listok* called "Advices and Responses," in which Pastukhov could write, for example: "To the merchant Il'iusha. Look after your wife, since she is caressing your lawyer: you go to the store, and there he is. Keep an eye on things."[5] Moscow merchants loved this newspaper and were afraid of Pastukhov. He had an intimate knowledge of their world. Giliarovsky, himself a star reporter, raised the popularity of the newspaper by his sensational reports. Once, when a barrack with workers was burnt in Orekhovo-Zuevo, the administration of the factory, with the help of the police, was trying to cover up. Giliarovsky dressed up as a worker, spent two days in the factory, and sent two reports to the newspaper with exact details of the event and names of the dead. The sales of *Moskovskii listok* were growing by the thousand.

Pastukhov started to publish serialized pulp fiction in his newspaper. A former village schoolteacher, Pazukhin wrote hundreds of stories and tens of novels for the newspaper. Usually, more copies were printed on Tuesdays and Fridays, when Pazukhin's novels were published. But Pastukhov himself wrote the most popular novel of the eighties—*The Robber Churkin*. Vasily Churkin was a famous brigand who operated in Moscow province, in the Guslitsa region. 'Guslitsa' is a magic word here.

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[4] V. Giliarovsky "Moskovskie gazety v 80-kh godakh," *Byloe* (1925, no. 6): 119.

[5] Ibid., 121.

Guslitsa was the region populated almost entirely by Old Believers. So it goes without saying that Vas'ka Churkin is an Old Believer. The important thing for us is that the author never overplays this motif. Apparently, in the eighties the schism was not that "hot" anymore. Maybe, it was never "hot" for Pastukhov's audience. Otherwise, Pastukhov would have found a way to emphasize it.

The Robber Churkin is a rather dull account of Vas'ka's crimes, which makes a contemporary reader recall Hanna Arendt's famous phrase about "the banality of evil." Churkin threatens and kills, beats and kills again. One day, when it becomes too dangerous to continue, he flees with his family to Siberia. There, he opens a tavern, proceeds with his 'trade,' then stages his own death and funeral. Even his wife is not aware of the deception. The brigand has a Turkish passport and dreams about relocating to Turkey, to the Nekrasovtsy hoping to find free and untrammeled life there.[6]

Churkin's adherence to the Old Belief is mentioned casually when he arrives in Siberia. This gives him connections and more trust among the local people. Staging his own funeral, Churkin does everything according to the Old Believer customs. The village elder, an Old Believer himself, decides to bury Churkin at the Old Believer cemetery. There are a few more matter-of-fact remarks of the schism that neither emphasize it, nor veil it in a shroud of mystery. Was Churkin's adherence to the Old Belief supposed to add to his charm? Hardly so, since it is not mentioned until quite late in the narration. It is only mentioned when Churkin arrives in Siberia where the level of tolerance to the religious dissent is higher than in European Russia.

I disagree strongly with J. Brooks who thinks that "Churkin is further isolated as an Old Believer, separated from what the Orthodox considered the true community of the faithful."[7] Just the opposite: Churkin operates in such regions (Guslitsa region, a village in Siberia) where Old Believers constitute the majority. So, his Old Belief gives him connections rather than severs them; a reader of the book would be sooner affected by this fact than those people who surround Churkin. In this sense, it is really symbolic that two most notorious pulp fiction criminals of the 1880s are Vasily Churkin and Sonia Bliuvshtein (Son'ka, the Golden Hand), the Old Believer and the Jewess. Probably, the effect of 'otherness' was playing a certain role in both cases.

Meanwhile, some publicists started to make a direct connection between the Old Belief and Russianness. Even populist authors stressed the spiritual needs of the people that found their expression in the schism. I. Iuzov asserted that strengthening of the *Raskol* showed failure of the society to satisfy some "vital spiritual needs of a person"[8]. People willing to avoid spiritual death had only one way to follow: into Raskol. In that way, Raskol absorbed "the best vital juices of the Russian people". As proof, he cited an Old Believers' song:

> A soul is waiting for its food.
> It needs to quench the thirst.
> Try not to leave your soul hungry.[9]

In Iuzov's opinion, the study of the schism was necessary for any public figure:

> The period of the social experiments over silent masses is passing, and we finally realize that improvements in social system have to be founded on the profound study of the nature of those personalities, which constitute the given society; only

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[6] N. K. Pastukhov *Razboinik Churkin. Narodnoe skazanie,* t. 3, 2-e izd. (Moskva, 1908): 95.
[7] J. Brooks *When Russia Learned to Read* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985): 189.
[8] I. Iuzov *Russkie dissidenty. Starovery i dukhovnye khristiane* (SPb, 1881): 5.
[9] Ibid., p. 110.

in this case the reforms will succeed. The intellectual and moral peculiarities of our people became apparent for the most part in the *Raskol*.[10]

A. S. Prugavin was probably the most popular and the most prolific publicist writing about the schism at the end of the nineteenth century. He starts his article, also published in 1881, with the similar idea: the spiritual, moral life of the Russian people is yet as unknown as it was one hundred years ago. Meanwhile, the schism, along with the peasant commune, is the most vivid phenomenon of the people's historical life. Even though numbers in the official reports show otherwise, the schism constantly grows and strengthens. The most gifted people go into the *Raskol*. What was the reason for that? "In the church and school people see only uniform, scholasticism, pedantry." [11]

Of course, in Prugavin's articles achievements of the schismatic communities were a little romanticized. Let us take as an example Guslitsa region, the birthplace of Vasily Churkin. *Moskovskii listok* described how badly this region was affected by the economic depression of the early eighties. At this time, J. Brooks emphasized, "Guslitsa was a hotbed of petty lawlessness... Horse stealing, cockfights, counterfeiting, and dealing in false passports and moonshine were part of life in this corner of Moscow Province."[12] Prugavin also mentions Guslitsa, but in a completely different context. He speaks about the high level of education and literacy in Old Believer regions compared to the regions populated by the churchgoers. Guslitsa region is his best example. However primitive the schools in Guslitsa might seem, the general literacy of the population of this region is its "inalienable legacy" and the cause of prosperity of the majority in this region.[13] It is even hard to believe that Prugavin writes about the same region!

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[10] Ibid., p. 5.
[11] A. S. Prugavin "Znachenie sektantstva v russkoi narodnoi zhizni", *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 1 (1881): 312.
[12] Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, p. 178.

All this praise of the schism certainly sounded like an indictment of the Orthodox Church. If the schism expressed "vital spiritual needs" of the people for all those years, what did the church do? Suddenly, official Orthodoxy had some open contestants. The double-sidedness of the problem of the schism makes it indicative of the role, which the past played in the Russian cultural discourse. The interest in Old Believers has been pointed in two directions, past and present. It was a *historical* search for the cause of such an abrupt religious split along with its influence on the following Russian history and also an examination of the *modern* problem of the "horrific increase" of religious deviations[14]. But in both cases, whether past or present was a particular author's concern, the question of Russian traditional culture, its value, its continuity and ruptures was pushed into the foreground.

One can see it in Musorgsky's opera *Khovanshchina* (The Khovansky Affair) written in the 1870s. His friends knew about its coming since early seventies; Musorgsky informed Stasov in 1880 that the opera was completed, "except for the last scene of self-immolation."[15] When Rimsky-Korsakov discovered the opera in Musorgsky's papers in 1881, about one month after the composer's death, the end of the second act and the finale were not orchestrated. Rimsky-Korsakov orchestrated the unfinished scenes, and an amateur group performed the opera for the first time in 1886. *Khovanshchina* is a masterpiece, but, being left unfinished, it is also a riddle. Suffice it to say that such composers as Stravinsky, Ravel, and Shostakovich completed different versions of its orchestration that changed the entire concept of the opera. Why was the opera re-orchestrated several times?

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[13] A. S. Prugavin "Zaprosy i proiavleniia kul'turnoi zhizni v raskole," *Staroobriadchestvo vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*, p. 113. This article was first published in *Russkaia Mysl'* in 1884.
[14] Prugavin, "Znachenie sektantstva," p. 340.
[15] M. P. Musorgsky *Literaturnoe nasledie*, t. 1 (Moskva: Muzyka, 1971): 260.

The plot is based on Muscovite politics of the late seventeenth century and the Strel'tsy (musketeers) uprising of 1682. The characters of the opera are boyars and princes as well as Muscovites, Old Believers, Strel'tsy, their wives, and soldiers of Tsar Peter's new regiment. As we have recounted in the first chapter of this work, the Streltsy uprising was held under Old Believer slogans of the return to Old Russia. Here is the apt characteristic of the first act of the opera given by Caryl Emerson:

> The dawn overture gives way to drunken musketeers recounting whom they had drawn, quartered, or crushed with stones the night before: lyricism prevails only as long as the protagonists sleep or dream. Once they wake up, it is non-stop denunciation, violence, cynicism, self-interest, and political intrigue. These themes are frequently clothed in lyrical form and surrounded by rich melodies, often to hypocritical effect. What love there is, belongs to the visionary, not to the incarnated world.[16]

At the end of the opera, when the uprising is suppressed, the group of Old Believers immolates itself in the forest *skit* in view of the advancing regiment of Peter I. This final scene is crucial for the rendering of the whole opera. Rimsky-Korsakov emphasized here the loud trumpets heralding the victory of new Russia over the old one. With this ending, the whole opera was read as a historical drama in which forces of progress prevail.

When Diagilev was staging the opera in Paris in 1913, he asked Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel to rewrite several scenes. In particular, instead of Rimsky's finale, Ravel wrote an Old Believer chorus to conclude the opera. With this conclusion, *Khovanshchina* turns into an epic tragedy: Old Russia is wiped out, but the new forces do not appear on stage. Musorgsky was a close friend of Kostomarov, and he acknowledged the help he received from the historian. This finale would be in agreement with Kostomarov's approach to history as, first of all, the history of the people. In this interpretation, Old Believers are not of this world anymore, they are martyrs, and their Russianness is immolated together with them in the forest skit fire.

In another chef-d'oeuvre, *Boris Godunov* Musorgsky had Pushkin's drama as the basis for his opera. In *Khovanshchina*, he used historical documents as such basis; he prepared for the writing of this opera by reading all available sources on the period of Sophia's reign. He wanted to write a true 'popular drama:' "not to make the acquaintance with the people, but to fraternize."[17] Having turned to history, Musorgsky came to the conclusion (similar to Leskov's) that nothing had changed in popular life since the end of the seventeenth century. 'The Mother-Rus' is still stifled and tortured by a horde of bureaucrats. That is why his objective was to show "the past in the present." Here is the justification of this objective, in the energetic and expressive Musorgsky style.

> "We have gone forward!"—lie, "*at the same place*!" A paper, a book has gone forward—we are *at the same place*. Until the people cannot see *with their own eyes* what is cooked out of them, until they do not want themselves that something

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[16] C. Emerson "Apocalypse Then, Now, and (For Us) Never: Reflections on Musorgsky's Other Historical Opera," in M. Musorgsky *Khovanshchina. The Opera Guide* (Paris, London, New York: Calder Publications Limited, 1994): 7.

[17] Musorgsky *Literaturnoe nasledie*, t. 1, p. 130.

> be *cooked* out of them—*at the same place.* All kinds of benefactors want to become famous and to seal this fame with documents, but people are moaning..: *at the same place.*[18]

The whole spirit of old Russia splashes out in the songs of *Raskol'niki*. But boyars, princes, and officials live in a different world. The choir of self-immolating Old Believers rivals the sound of trumpets, which are symbolizing changes brought by Peter the Great, but Peter is not on the scene. The attention is concentrated on the destruction and suffering of old Russia. There is no hope left for the spectators, the future is bleak and vague. Not the changes of power, but grave thoughts about the destiny of the nation come with the conclusion of the opera.

R. Bartlett presents *Khovanshchina* as "an eloquent counterpart to the great novels of the period, *Anna Karenina* and *The Brothers Karamazov* (both of which were written in the 1870s), which mirror the spiritual crisis and moral and social chaos of late nineteenth-century European culture."[19] All previous pages of this work might serve as a proof that *Khovanshchina* should be seen in a completely different context, in the context of the painful search for roots and identity. Yes, *Anna Karenina* and *The Brothers Karamazov* are in line with the European spiritual crisis. But *Khovanshchina*, as we have shown, is another remark in all-Russian discussion of the past, of the role and meaning of the Old Belief in Russian history.

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[18] Ibid., p. 132. All italics are in the original.

[19] R. Bartlett "*Khovanshchina* in context," in M. Musorgsky *Khovanshchina. The Opera Guide*, p. 37.

The same year *Khovanshchina* was discovered (1881), and on the precise day that the Tsar Alexander II was assassinated (March 1); *Peredvizhniki*[20] (Wanderers) opened their new exhibition. V. I. Surikov prepared his most controversial picture for this exhibition—"The Morning of Strel'tsy's Execution," in which we encounter the same theme that Musorgsky used in *Khovanshchina*. This coincidence is especially revealing if we look into the difference in origin between Musorgsky and Surikov. It tells us how overwhelming the interest in the Old Belief had become in the 1870s and 1880s. Musorgsky was born into an old noble family;[21] he started his military service in the Preobrazhensky guards, the elite regiment. Surikov was from the Siberian Cossacks; he came to Petersburg from Krasnoyarsk to study art. Each of them turned to the subject of the suppression of the Strel'tsy rebellion as a critical moment in Russian history. Of course, each kind of art has its own means of expressing thoughts and feelings. Let us follow the history of Surikov's picture and see whether the Siberian Cossack's view of the event differed from the view of the nobleman.

Shortly before Surikov's death, M. Voloshin started to write a book about him. Surikov agreed to meet and talk with the writer regularly; in these conversations he told the story of his life and of many of his pictures. Surikov claimed that he actually saw Russia of the seventeenth century, because he lived in Siberia. Nothing changed there; people were strong in spirit. Here are his recollections of life in Krasnoyarsk written down by Voloshin. It is amazing indeed how the perception of the nineteen-century painter is informed here by the perception of the seventeenth-century boy. These recollections also allow us to appreciate the richness of Surikov's experience. He did see a lot of persecutions:

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[20] In the second half of the nineteenth century, *Peredvizhniki* was a group of talented Russian realist painters, who were in conflict with the Academy and organized Association of Traveling Art Exhibitions (1870-1923). The first exhibition was organized in 1871; regular yearly exhibitions followed.

> The customs were cruel. Persecutions and corporal punishments were held publicly at the squares. The scaffold was not far from my school... We, children used to go from school and hear the shouts "They come! They come!" We would all run to the square after the cart. Children liked the executioners. We looked at them as at heroes. We knew them by names: who Sashka is, who – Mishka. They had red shirts and wide trousers... The beauty of it always impressed me. Black scaffold, red shirt – what a beauty!
>
> I remember one was flogged; he stood as a martyr: didn't utter a cry. All of us—boys—were sitting on a fence. His body turned red at first, then—blue: only venous blood was flowing. They give [to convicts] alcohol to smell. One Tartar was braving out, but started to cry after the second flog. People laughed a lot. I remember one woman was flogged; she killed her husband, a drayman. She thought she would be flogged in skirts and put on a lot on herself. When executioners tore off her skirts – they flew in the air like doves. She cried like a cat – all the people were laughing...
>
> I saw capital punishments twice. Once three men were executed for arson. One lad was tall, like Shaliapin, the other one was an old man. They were driven in carts, in white shirts... I was close. A volley was fired. Red spots appeared on their shirts. Two fell down. The lad was still standing. Then he also fell down. And, after a while, I saw, he was rising. Another volley was fired. And he rose

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[21] Actually, Musorgsky was born into an ancient family; only his grandfather married his own serf, a very beautiful and musical peasant girl. Musorgsky's father was born out of this misalliance.

again. Such awe, I tell you. Then, one officer approached, pointed a revolver, and killed him.[22]

There are a lot of deaths and suffering in these childhood recollections, but this world is not sad; everything is so simple and clear, as it can be only in a childhood. Bad guys should suffer. Even convicts understand, "if you did something, you have to pay."[23] People are laughing. Bodies turn red then blue. Surikov could choose to draw persecutions themselves and rivers of blood that covered the Red Square. He had all the knowledge and visions for such a picture. He told Voloshin that he was tormented by nightmares during his work on this picture: every night he saw the persecutions and smelled the blood. Instead of depicting these nightmares, he chose to draw a moment just several minutes before the executions started. Blood was not shed yet. He told Voloshin: "I didn't want to trouble the spectator. I wanted calmness in everything... I wanted to convey the solemnity of last minutes, not the execution."[24]

We know that Musorgsky consulted scholarly literature when he was writing his opera. His list of readings includes all important works of Russian historiography on the subject and a lot of appropriate sources: Kostomarov, Shchapov, Soloviev, Avvakum to name but a few. Surikov, on the contrary, asserted that he did not need books in order to create this painting. All these faces and clothes he had seen back at home in Siberia. When he first came to Moscow, he immediately realized that he found the locale for his childhood recollections. "Monuments, squares – they gave me the setting in which I could place my Siberian impressions. I looked at monuments like at living people, and questioned them... The walls I questioned, not the books."[25] Surikov did not need to consult books about the customs or clothes of the old Russia, because he lived there. That is why it was so easy for him to find prototypes for his images: he knew exactly how they should look. Of course, Surikov studied monographs and sources for this picture, but he also used his childhood recollections. It was not by accident that Moscow Old Believers were very impressed by this picture, contacted Surikov, and later helped him in the search for images for his another famous canvass, "Boyarynia Morozova."

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[22] M. Voloshin "Surikov," in *Vasily Ivanovich Surikov. Pis'ma. Vospominaniia o khudozhnike* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1977): 176-7.

[23] Ibid, p. 176.

[24] Ibid., p. 183. At the same page, Surikov also tells how he was finishing the picture, and Repin came to see it. He was quite surprised that nobody was persecuted on the canvass. He advised, "to hang someone on the right side." When he left, Surikov decided to try and drew the hanged man. Nanny entered the room and fainted away. This was certainly the wrong path to follow. Surikov did not want to scare spectators.

Surikov's visions and paintings might serve as another proof of Leskov's assertion that Russian people had not changed since the seventeenth century. Traditionally, "The Morning of Strel'tsy's Execution" was interpreted as the depiction of the fight between old and new (the Strel'tsy and the Tsar) or between the state and the people. These motifs are certainly present, but the small figure of the Tsar is moved aside from the main focus. Again, like the triumphant trumpets in *Khovanshchina*, Peter is only a reminder of the coming changes. As in *Khovanshchina*, there is a growing realization of the impenetrable wall between the people and the state. The people and their spirit are at the center of attention. The picture was the sensation of the Ninth Traveling exhibition. I. E. Repin wrote before its opening: "Surikov's picture has made a profound expression on everyone. All of us agreed to give it the best place; it is written on all faces that it is our pride at this exhibition."[26]

Several other painters turned to the subject of the schism at the same time. In 1882, famous Russian artist, V. G. Perov died, during his last years he worked on historical picture, "Nikita Pustosviat." The subject and time of the picture are exactly the same as in *Khovanshchina*. Comparing these two works, V. V. Stasov wrote:

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[25] Ibid., p. 182.
[26] I. E. Repin *Izbrannye pis'ma v dvukh tomakh, 1867-1930*, t. 1 (Moskva, Iskusstvo, 1969): 246.

> Both authors are not the least bit hostile or intolerant towards schismatic, sectarian Rus' notwithstanding the whole sediment of absurdity and deep-rooted backwardness and savageness that was present there alongside many good things. Both authors saw ... with the very eyes of their souls what wonders, might, purity, and sincerity were to be found on the side of this Rus', and most of all they saw how it was in its own right when it defended its old life with teeth and nails. That is why Perov and Musorgsky made the main personalities of their pictures so sympathetic.[27]

Miasoedov worked for several years on the picture called "Self-Immolators" and exhibited it in 1882 at the Tenth Traveling Exhibition. Then, he continued to work on it for another two years, and afterwards the picture was dated 1884.[28] In 1885 the work of S. D. Miloradovich "Chernyi sobor" (The Black Council) was unanimously accepted to the Thirteenth Exhibition, even though Miloradovich was not a member of the Association of Wanderers. The picture had a subtitle, "Uprising of the Solovetskii Monastery against new-printed books in 1666." Next year, Miloradovich presented "Sud nad patriarkhom Nikonom" (The Trial of Patriarch Nikon), but the picture was so poor that the Association had to reject it.[29]

None of these works could compete in popularity with Surikov's "Boyarynia Morozova." This picture, first exhibited in 1887, came to represent the schism in the

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[27] V. V. Stasov "Perov i Musorgsky. (1834-1882 i 1839-1881)," *Sobranie sochinenii*, t. 2 (S-Peterburg, 1894): 267.

[28] I. Shuvalova *Miasoedov* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1971): 79-80.

[29] Repin, *Izbrannye pis'ma, p.* 309.

Russian national consciousness. We have already discussed the symbolic figure of Morozova, probably, the most popular person among poor people in Moscow: her alms were always generous. For his picture, Surikov chose the moment of her arrest. *Boyarynia* is fettered; she is sitting in a wood-sledge, which will bring her to prison. She raises her right hand with two-finger sign high in the air. Her enormous spiritual power is gripping; she attracts all eyes. From that time on Surikov's picture would be an important visual representation of the schism in popular consciousness.

We did not want and could not analyze all works of the 1880s that had the schism or some important schismatic figures as their subject. Our task was to show that the figure of a *Raskolnik* was not strange and mysterious anymore. At the same time, the questions of historical roots of the schism, of its role in Russian history drew the attention of writers, composers, and painters. Russian society was gradually coming to terms with this phenomenon. But what about the church and the government? In order to show how the policies concerning the schism were shaping in the 1880s, we will investigate the correspondence of one professional schism-fighter, N. I. Subbotin.

5. 2 The Fear of the Double: The Deadly Fight of N. I. Subbotin

> His hair stood on end, and he collapsed senseless with horror on the spot. And small wonder. He had fully recognized his friend of the night. It was none other than himself—Mr. Goliadkin. Another Mr. Goliadkin, but exactly the same as him... It was, in short, his double.
>
> F. M. Dostoevsky *The Double*

Fortune smiled on Nikolai Ivanovich Subbotin at the dawn of his career. In 1855, he started to teach at the Moscow Theological Academy, specializing in religious denominations, heresies, and the schism. In the early sixties, he made the acquaintance of such important figures of the Austrian Old Believer hierarchy as Pafnuty, the bishop of Kolomna (we have already talked about him in connection with Kelsiev), Onufry, the bishop of Brailov, and Filaret, the archdeacon from Belaia Krinitsa, who came to Moscow to defend the Encyclical (Okruzhnoe poslanie). An internal crisis within the Priestist denomination was created by the Encyclical, by the liberalization of government's policies concerning the *Raskol'niki*, and by all the hopeful atmosphere of the first years of the new reign. This crisis excited some doubts in those people who contacted Nikolai Ivanovich. They started to converse, then cooperated with him, and informed him about all important events within their community. As a result, in 1863-1866 Subbotin published a series of articles "Contemporary Movements in the Schism"[30] and became one of the most well informed specialists on the subject.

When his Old Believer friends were ready to join the Russian Orthodox Church, they decided to thank Subbotin for his concern and help. In order to assist him in writing the history of the Austrian hierarchy, they stole and brought to Moscow *the entire archive* from Belaia Krinitsa. The priceless archive passed into personal possession of N. I. Subbotin. Two books, *The Schism as an Instrument of the Parties Hostile to Russia* and *The Origin of the So Called Austrian Hierarchy Existing Now among the Old Ritualists*,[31] as well as some articles were based on the materials from this archive. In 1874, Subbotin received a doctoral degree in divinity for the book about the Austrian hierarchy.

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[30] "Sovremennye dvizheniia v raskole," *Russkii vestnik* (1863, nos. 5, 7, 11, 12; 1864, nos. 1, 2; 1865, nos. 1, 2, 3, 5; 1866, no. 1)

[31] *Raskol kak orudie vrazhdebnykh Rossii partii* was published in *Russkii Vestnik* (1867, nos. 4, 5) and appeared as a book in the same year. *Proiskhozhdenie nyne sushchestvuyushchei u staroobriadtsev, tak nazyvaemoi avstriiskoi ierarkhii*

Subbotin's career blossomed after these initial successes, especially in the 1880s. Many awards and promotions appeared in his service record during those years. He always worked extremely hard publishing many books and about 400 articles in all and preparing a nine-volume edition of *Materials for the History of the Schism.* Even though Subbotin's role in the history of the schism is not very attractive one, as we will see, his *Materials* are still considered to be the most complete edition of documents concerning the schism. But it was not only for scholarly achievements that he received his awards. His successes of the 1880s were connected with his close friendship and cooperation with Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, the omnipotent Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod. This cooperation started in 1880 when Pobedonostsev was assigned to the post of the Chief Procurator and continued for more than 20 years. One cannot overlook the symbolic fact that Subbotin died and Pobedonostsev resigned from his post in 1905, when freedom of conscience was proclaimed in Russia. So, their common cause, the twenty-five-year struggle against the schism ended in utter defeat. Reading and analyzing a mammoth volume of correspondence between the two,[32] comparing their view of the schism with the views of their opponents should add to our understanding of the spiritual situation in the 1880s.

Blok's famous lines about the end of the nineteenth century, probably best expressed the essence of Pobedonostsev's image in Russian literature and historiography:

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[32] V. S. Markov, ed. *K istorii raskola-staroobriadchestva vtoroi poloviny XIX stoletiia. Perepiska professora Subbotina, preimushchestvenno neizdannaia, kak material dlia istorii raskola i otnoshenii k nemu pravitel'stva (1865-1904gg.)* (Moskva: Izdanie Imperatorskago Obshchestva Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom Universitete, 1914).

In those far-off years of stagnation,
All hearts were filled with sleep and gloom:
Pobedonostsev over Russia
Had spread owl-like wings of doom,
And there was neither day nor night –
Only the shadow of vast wings;
He drew a magic circle right
Round all Russia, riveting
Her with his wizard's glassy stare.[33]

The figure of Pobedonostsev is ominous, almost of mythological magnitude in this poem: he, and he alone holds Russia in darkness. In his correspondence with N. I. Subbotin we can trace the hardening of his attitude towards the schism and the connection of this attitude with the rigidity of his ideal of Russianness. For Pobedonostsev, as well as for Subbotin, Russianness means Russian state and Orthodox Church taken together, without any overtones. We could not find any change of this denotation throughout all correspondence. A few examples should demonstrate how this fixed conviction, constantly hardened by struggles, influenced the state actions towards the schism. They will also elucidate the mechanism of connection between the professor of the Theological Academy and the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod.

In 1881 a monk from Belaia Krinitsa started to publish a newspaper, *Staroobriadets* (Old Ritualist) in Bukovina. The publisher applied to the Russian government asking for the permission to circulate the newspaper in Russia. The Chief Procurator asked professor Subbotin for his advice. In response, Nikolai Ivanovich wrote an official document, "Explanation in consequence of the inquiry made by K. P. Pobedonostsev concerning the newspaper *Old Ritualists*." In Subbotin's opinion, this newspaper was originally created with one and only goal: to circulate it in Russia (the number of Old Believers living abroad was too insignificant). Subbotin listed three intended target groups of this newspaper: first, Old Believers; second (and this is especially important) the "much-procreated" Russian liberals, who "fight for the complete freedom of the schism and of any other religious cult, without even hiding their preference for the schism against the Orthodoxy, which they value as little as they know it;"[34] and third, target group is the Russian government, from whom the Old Believers expected to get religious freedom.

The invective on liberals reveals Subbotin's apprehensions: he feared that the schism could replace Orthodoxy. His logic was understandable: irreligious liberals would prefer the historic authenticity of the schism, its traditional Russianness to the hard grip of the state church. The government was also driven by most general liberal principles, having absolutely no grasp of the situation and its history, no awareness of the fact that the schism and the Orthodox Church were deadly enemies. "The Explanation" was written in January 1881 when Alexander II was still alive and preparing new liberal reforms for Russia. At the conclusion of this document, Subbotin declared "with all resoluteness" against the free circulation of the aforementioned newspaper.[35] Naturally, the newspaper was not allowed in Russia.

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[33] A. Blok *Selected Poems*. Translated by Alex Miller (Moskva: Progress Publishers, 1981): 291.

[34] N. I. Subbotin "Ob'iasnenie vsledstvie zaprosa K. P. Pobedonostseva otnositel'no gazety "Staroobriadets," in Markov, *K istorii*, p. 191.

[35] Ibid., p. 194.

Ten days later Subbotin received from Pobedonostsev a confidential letter with the following content:

> The schismatic bishop Alipy, living in Galats, petitions the Minister of Internal Affairs for permission to come to Izmail for the meeting with his dying brother. Supposedly, he will be allowed a short-time stay. They ask for my opinion. I want to answer, but before this, I am asking you (and expect a quick answer); whether you are aware of any dangers or hidden intentions in this matter through relations with some people, whom I do not know.[36]

It is not even clear what Pobedonostsev is asking for: for learned advice or for denunciation? Subbotin's answer contained none of the above. In his letter we find detailed political analysis of the situation and precise recommendation: Alipy could come to Izmail, but not in the status of a bishop. Maybe, the *Raskol'niki* were fishing for a precedent, since in the past "*Raskol'niki* from abroad always found a possibility to come to Russia without petitioning the Ministry of Internal Affairs."[37] Alipy could also easily have come without permission. Therefore, "his coming to Russia under the bishop's title might harm the church."

We do not know Pobedonostsev's own opinion on the matter when he asked for the advice of the professor. Only one thing is for sure: it was under Subbotin's pen that a simple question turned into a rigidly formulated political matter: they and we. Subbotin guarded the interests of the church and the state. In order to demonstrate how intense at times was the cooperation between the professor and the Procurator, we should mention that at the same time "the explanation" and the letter about Alipy were written, Subbotin was also working on a major project. On the request of Pobedonostsev, Subbotin wrote an article "About the Essence and Meaning of the Schism in Russia," which appeared in 1881 in the newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti*, and then was immediately published as a brochure in the printing house of the Holy Synod. There was no author's name on the brochure, only the initials – N. S. – at the end.

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[36] Ibid., p. 195.

[37] "Pis'mo N. I. Subbotina, February 2, 1881," Ibid., p. 196.

Although the title of the brochure sounds quite general, it was written on a concrete occasion. The government was to decide the question about opening the sealed altars in the chapel of the Rogozhskoe cemetery. For Subbotin, it was tantamount to giving permission to Old Believer priests to perform services openly; therefore, it meant the religious freedom for Old Believers, which was so dreadful for him. In their petition, *Raskol'niki* expressed bewilderment: why, they asked, are all other religions, even non-Christian ones allowed to openly perform their services? Why are only Old Believers restricted? Subbotin's answer was simple: the Russian schism appears as mainly a negation of the Orthodoxy, as constant and active striving to overthrow the Orthodox Russian Church and to occupy its place. If it takes its place, it would not even need to change the name; it would call itself the Orthodox Russian Church; "none of the existing Christian denominations can even consider such an attempt."[38]

Subbotin's brochure was requested as a historical note on the matter for historically-illiterate bureaucrats. Pobedonostsev himself wrote the official response to the Old Believers' petition. It reinforces all the points taken by Subbotin.

> Satisfaction of this demand would strike a heavy blow upon the Orthodox Church and upon the state at the same time, because the church and the state are inseparable. It would bring a new schism, the schism between the church and the

> state, since Orthodox Russian people will never accept the Russian state's view of the schism as a foreign faith; they know quite well that the schism is, on the contrary—a domestic enemy—an impostor, aspiring to capture the name and the rights of the Orthodox Church, to subdue it, and to take up its place.[39]

Our old acquaintance Pafnuty,[40] Subbotin's former friend, wrote a detailed response to Subbotin's brochure, in which he called our professor 'an informer.'[41] Leskov also responded to the brochure and immediately guessed its origin, "it has a character of a note; the kind of notes that usually are prepared for familiarizing with the matter some members of some complicated institution who are not familiar with the question on the agenda."[42] Leskov, as well as other critics did not find anything new in Subbotin's arguments; he was only unpleasantly surprised by Subbotin's praise for the measures undertaken by Nicholas I. The services of the professor did not go unnoticed: in April 1881 he received a promotion to the rank of State Councilor (*statskii sovetnik)*. He promptly thanked Pobedonoststev: "it is to you for the most part, if not solely, that I am indebted for the monarchal favour."[43]

To blame Nikolai Ivanovich for being an informer is easy; there is a lot of evidence even in the letters. For our study it is more important to show that this part of Subbotin's activities was a consequence of his ideal of Russianness. Subbotin's actions

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[38] N. S. *O sushchnosti i znachenii raskola v Rossii* (S-Peterburg, 1881): 10.

[39] "Proekt otveta ober-prokurora Sv. Sinoda K. P. Pobedonostseva na pros'bu raskol'nikov (ot avgusta 1881 goda o raspechatanii altarei na Rogozhskom kladbishche)," in V. S. Markov *K istorii*, p. 663.

[40] The former bishop of Kolomna in the Austrian Old Believer hierarchy, the one, who visited London, was in contact with Kelsiev, and later, with a group of Old Believer clerics, joined the Orthodoxy. Pafnuty is a very controversial figure. He joined the church in the late 1860s and in the late 1870s he became close to the schism again. It is from conversations with him that Leskov gets his profound knowledge of the schism during those years.

[41] Pafnutii "Apologiia khristian-staroobradtsev..." in Markov, *K istorii*, p. 687.

[42] N. L. "O sushchnosti i znachenii raskola v Rossii," *Istoricheskii vestnik* (1881, no. 6): 840.

[43] "Pis'mo N. I. Subbotina 29-go aprelia [1881]," in Markov *K istorii*, p. 203.

and attitudes are similar in their character to the ones we find among the Old Believers. For him, the ideals of Russian religion were his own existential values; therefore, he considered any attack against the church as an attack against him personally. The abovementioned work, *On the Essence and Meaning of the Schism in Russia* is especially revealing in this regard. What scared the professor? If the Old Belief took the place of the church, it would not even need to change the name! It sounds like a reminder of Dostoevsky's book *Dvoinik* (The Double), which traces how a minor clerk, Mr. Goliadkin gradually loses his sanity, because he sees his double everywhere: in the office, at the streets, and at home. The most awful thing is that this double has the same name! His constant presence is so scary; it deprives Goliadkin of any chance to ponder the situation.

At the time of spiritual confusion, some writers and intellectuals considered the Old Belief as the Other, as an original or deviating stream of Russianness. Subbotin, whose reasoning was confined by the rigid framework of state-church interests, could not consider questions of schism in an intellectual or cultural context. He saw Old Belief only as the Double; therefore, he did not have time to ponder: he was guided by the logic of a deadly fight. He acted relentlessly; he never waited for an opportune moment to harm the enemies of the church. When it was possible, he condemned them in print, but during the eighties, his articles became less and less welcome in Moscow periodicals. His own journal, *Bratskoe slovo* (Brother's Word), had a very small circulation; few read it. At the same time, he often felt that urgent actions were needed, that *Raskol'niki* deceived the people and the state, and all his public motions could not help. Then, he complained to Pobedonostsev.

On December 4, 1882 he reported an attempt being made to publish the second volume of the popular (especially, among the *Raskol'niki*) book *Historical Studies in Defense of Old Ritualism*. In a letter of January 24, 1883 Pobedonostsev informed the professor: "Following your instructions we have got on the tracks. In Martynov's printing house we seized 1200 books and found the information that, on top of this, 450 books were handed to Karlovich. His house was searched; 407 books – seized; the printing house handed over to justice."[44]

In another, even less attractive episode, Subbotin complained about his own former friend, Pafnuty. Initially, Pafnuty was the head of the so-called "Subbotin circle," a group of the Priestist Old Believer clerics who converted into Orthodoxy in 1865, under the influence of Subbotin. Pafnuty was a very important figure in the 1860s among those Old Believers who accepted the Austrian hierarchy. Since their archbishop, Antony Shutov, was sitting in Belaia Krinitsa, Pafnuty, as the bishop of Kolomna, was the main authority inside Russia. He enjoyed especially great influence among the Moscow Old Believers. At first, a warm friendship connected him with Subbotin. But in 1867, another Old Believer authority, this time of Priestless denomination, Paul the Prussian, also joined the church and quickly became the dominant figure in the "Subbotin circle." Pafnuty's morbid pride was hurt. His relations with Subbotin soured.

Pafnuty returned into the schism in the late 1870s. In 1882 Subbotin complained to Pobedonostsev about Pafnuty's actions emphasizing the fact that Pafnuty "still receives from the Holy Synod 500 roubles a year for the missionary work against the schism!"[45] Of course, the stipend was promptly taken from Pafnuty. Here, as well as in many other occasions, Subbotin instigated Pobedonostsev to act. Much more often he acted himself. He wrote as if he were fighting a battle. The procurator often asked him to exercise caution or to stop the debate. For instance, Pobedonostsev warned him in one letter:

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[44] Markov *K istorii*, p. 308.
[45] Markov *K istorii*, p. 237.

> We live at the time when people of good will need to be particularly discreet in polemics. Dust has risen – people do not see each other clearly in the dust. A jumble of notions is in all heads. Instead of healthy logical argumentation, vulgar, market-place style influences minds, that is why one has to stay away from this market... Unfortunately, some light-headed people, some self-opinionated ignorami, albeit powerful ones, carry on a reckless coquetry with the schism. This is why Leskov and Co. are so brave this is why it is not a good time to appear at the newspaper arena with denunciations. Everything has been taken and bought at this arena.[46]

But Subbotin could only be restrained for a short period. Pobedonostsev was more sensitive to the spirit of time and to fluctuations in government policies, he was more cautious and cunning in his fighting. After Subbotin's next bellicose article, he admonished the professor that one needed "not only zeal, but also snake's wisdom; nothing can be done with zeal only, without a lever in the temporal government."[47] Unfortunately, Pobedonostsev lamented, this lever was weakening.

Usually Nikolai Ivanovich agreed, justified himself, and apologized in a servile manner. For example: "Advices of prudence, which were given by your Excellency, taken with submission and gratitude. I hope they will do me good."[48] In general, Subbotin's letters were business-like and humble. It is more interesting to look at those episodes when he lost his temper and disagreed with his patron. It is here that one should be able to see Subbotin's real values: the conflict with Pobedonostsev could be damaging for his career.

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[46] Ibid., p. 266-7.
[47] Markov *K istorii*, p. 366.

Sometimes he did it mildly, as in the instance with Verkhovskii, a Uniate (*edinoverie*) priest, who defended Old Belief and criticized the church. Pobedonostsev invited this priest for a talk[49] and informed Subbotin that Verkhovskii listened to him in silence. Maybe, his faults were not too great and he should be pardoned or at least left in peace for a while. Subbotin's letter drifted from the usual submissiveness to bitterness:

> Whether Verkhovskii should be recommended for mercy is not for me to judge, I do not even know him personally. Verkhovskii's personality does not mean anything here. The cause and dignity of the Orthodox Church are important. The cause and the word of Verkhovskii are known from many of his works: he should be subject to the church court and to the conviction in accordance with the church canons. By not bringing him to justice, by disregarding the church canons, we injure our dignity.

He continued by informing Pobedonostsev that his critique of Verkhovskii had already been sent to the printing house, when the letter of admonition against polemic was received. The last sentence was unusually dry: "If you order, I will stop it."[50] In this instance one can clearly see the foundation of Subbotin's bellicosity better than anywhere else. He asserted that the most important things were "the cause and the dignity of the

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[48] Ibid., p. 369.

[49] Pobedonostsev always preferred these private talks to newspaper squabbles.

Orthodox Church." But the next sentences reveal that he identified the dignity of the church with the *personal* dignity of its guardians, and maybe, most of all – with his own personal dignity. Of course, we have to remember that in the Orthodox view, the church is not so much an institution, but a communion, that is to say, a community united by faith.[51] Therefore, it was normal for a deeply believing Orthodox man to take an insult on the church personally. But could a serious and honest historical work be considered such an insult?

Our next example of Subbotin's disagreement with Pobedonostsev should demonstrate how his narrowly understood personal mission of defending this traditional Orthodox unity turned into a personal vendetta. The conflict of N. I. Subbotin with N. F. Kapterev was widely known and frequently discussed in Moscow ecclesiastic and scholarly circles in the 1880s. I will relate it here in the following order: first, Kapterev's version, which also happens to be the version of Russian democratic and liberal press; and second, Subbotin's interpretation of events as it is cited in his letters.

Like Subbotin, Kapterev was the son of a priest. He also graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy; only he was twenty years younger than Subbotin. His mentor was the famous scholar and Rector of the Academy, A. V. Gorskii. In 1884, Kapterev published a book, *The Character of Russia's Relations with Orthodox East in XVI-XVII Centuries* and presented it to the Academic Council as his doctoral dissertation. The book was based on a thorough archival research. The author spent ten years in the Large Moscow Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, studying so-called "Greek and Turkish files." One of his conclusions was that "Russians had all the grounds to treat

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[50] Markov *K istorii*, p. 369.

Greek piety of that time with suspicion," and Patriarch Nikon was wrong to follow the guidance of Greeks in the correction of Russian church books.

He asserted that many fortune-seekers came to Russia from the East in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He found documents attesting that many sacred objects brought from the East during those centuries were faked ones. Kapterev's first trouble with censorship came up in 1883, when he, following the usual procedure, started to publish his work in installments. The printing of the third chapter was stopped by the censor, archimandrite Amfilokhii, who was outraged by the fact that one of those faked objects, which were described by Kapterev, was kept and revered in Moscow Arkhangel'skii Cathedral. It was Moscow metropolitan Ioannikii who allowed the publication to continue.

Kapterev also managed to find authentic materials of investigations on Arsenii the Greek, who helped Nikon to amend the books. Old Believers used to say that Arsenii was educated by Jesuits; therefore, he could not be trusted with the amendment of Russian Orthodox books. Throughout the years these accusations were treated as products of hatred and mental darkness. Kapterev showed that Nikon's enemies were correct: prior to his arrival in Russia, Arsenii the Greek studied with Jesuits, adopted Catholicism, then returned to Constantinople and was converted to Islam. Upon discovering these details, the Moscow government secluded him in the Solovetskii Monastery "for the righting of his Orthodox faith." Nikon elicited him from there. Thus, Kapterev's conclusion was that historiography should reevaluate Nikon's reform and accusations of his adversaries.

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[51] John Meyendorff *The Orthodox Church. Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981). See especially Chapter X, "Orthodox View of the Church."

The Academic Council granted Kapterev the doctoral degree, and the Synod confirmed this decision. But it was Pobedonostsev who personally (of course, after the interference of professor Subbotin) cancelled the Synod's resolution on the ground that Kapterev was "disrespectful to our Mother, the Greek Church."[52] The Academy of Sciences awarded Kapterev the prestigious Uvarov prize for this book. The Academic Council was on Kapterev's side and supported him by awarding the status of extraordinary professor despite the lack of degree. But he still had to write another dissertation. His next attempt, the work called *Patriarch Nikon and His Adversaries in the Amendment of the Church Rites* (1887) was also prohibited by Pobedonostsev after its first installment. There was no sense in presenting it as a doctoral dissertation. Kapterev was to write yet another, which did not touch any sensitive questions, and his degree was finally conferred in 1891. This is the story as it was told by Kapterev himself in the foreword to the second edition of his first book.

Now let us see this conflict through the prism of Subbotin's letters. First, the name of Kapterev appears in Subbotin's letter from August 2, 1885 in connection with the writings of the already familiar to us Verkhovskii. In his new work against the Orthodox Church Verkhovskii borrowed some argumentation from Kapterev's book. One can see from the letter that it was not Subbotin but another respectable professor of the Academy, Golubinskii, who did not recommend to proceed with the defense of Kapterev's dissertation.[53] Subbotin also mentions that Kapterev is the son-in-law of the rector of the Academy, S. K. Smirnov, maybe thereby alluding to why the Academic Council was so supportive of Kapterev.

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[52] N. F. Kapterev "Predislovie ko vtoromu izdaniiu," *Kharakter otnoshenii Rossii k pravoslavnomu vostoku v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh.* 2-e izd. (Sergiev Posad, 1914): III.

Next, we encounter Kapterev's name in a letter from March 3, 1887 when he started to publish his new work on Nikon. Subbotin was enraged by its title, "Nikon as a church reformer". He asks: "What kind of nonsense is this? Do the *Raskol'niki* have now the right to say that we are reformers just as there are those other reformers—Lutherans?.. Is the restoration of the right service rites, undertaken by Nikon, really a reform?"[54] One can hear some bewilderment in these persistent questions. Subbotin was also disheartened by the fact that *Raskol'niki* in Moscow knew about the appearance of the work and were waiting for it. In his next letter, Subbotin complained about the new installment of Kapterev's work calling it "unruly and thoughtless."

Two months later, Pobedonostsev needed to bridle the professor again: "This polemic about Kapterev's articles utterly distresses me. I hoped that you would not answer to the retort of the *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*.[55] Unfortunately, my hope was not realized... I advise and persuade to stop all these polemics."[56] Subbotin's answer was very long and detailed; it developed from justification to defiance:

> I am deeply touched and puzzled by the fact that I had the misfortune of distressing you with my articles about Kapterev's articles, and I would like with all willingness to fulfill your advice "to stop all these polemics," if only I had such a possibility at this particular moment. I will do what I can: I will not respond to cruel attacks and abuse; it is not even hard for me, because I an accustomed enough to abuse and even threats of the *Raskol'niki* and of their

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[53] Markov, *K istorii*, p. 420.
[54] Ibid., p. 472.
[55] Kapterev's articles were published in *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie* (Orthodox Review). After Subbotin published a critique of the articles in his journal *Bratskoe slovo* (1887, pp. 468-475), the editor of the *Orthodox Review*, Preobrazhenskii, wrote a small note, "To Mr. Prof. Subbotin," in which he called Subbotin's critique of Kapterev "slander of an old times' scrivener or of a more zealous than mindful obscurant." Subbotin rejoined with another hammering article: Preobrazhenskii was his personal enemy.

> dishonest servitors. But I cannot leave Kapterev's articles (especially about the two-finger sign of cross) without a critique, and not only because I promised to do so, but also because of the essence of this whole affair... One can say that the schism as a whole is hanging on the question about the two-finger sign of cross. If we admit... that we, Russians, adopted the two-finger sign under St. Vladimir and constantly held on to it until Nikon's reform, then, we should, first, cross out all our two-century anti-schismatic literature, and, second, give ourselves up to the *Raskol'niki*, and implore their forgiveness, since up to now we either lied when defending the three-finger sign or did not understand the matter.[57]

Subbotin continued by asserting that it was inconceivable to leave such 'malicious articles' without objections. To undo the harm done by those articles was impossible, he lamented: the *Raskol'niki* would reproduce them in many copies and would have the necessary materials in order to argue with missionaries. In short, Subbotin refused to keep silent because nobody else would stand out against "Kapterev's lie." He also saw these articles as a personal attack. He surmised that they were sponsored by Arsenii Morozov, a wealthy Old Believer and reported that Kapterev's brother, "a nihilist, like all Kapterevs" was a priest in Bogorodsk where he also worked as a teacher at the Morozov factory. Everyone in Bogorodsk knew that those articles were directed against Subbotin personally.[58]

The problem is, according to Subbotin, that even the highest church authorities supported Kapterev. Moscow metropolitan, Ioannikii, reproached Subbotin for his polemic publicly, during an official dinner, in the presence of the entire 'academic

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[56] Letter of Pobedonostsev, May 22, 1887, in Markov, *K istorii*, pp. 478-9.
[57] Markov, *K istorii*, pp. 479-80.

corporation,' including Kapterev. The professor did not find it appropriate and left the room. Then, Ioannikii repeated this reproach during the exam in the presence of Subbotin's assistants and students. The end of this long letter is quite bitter, "this is the award for my thirty-five-year irreproachable service." Subbotin did not give in, he disagreed with his patron. He did not investigate Kapterev's arguments. The only important thing for him was that they were harmful for the church. In the next letter, Pobedonostsev backed off: "When I wrote about stopping the polemic, I did not mean to keep you from answering the opinions and conclusions of Kapterev. I am only concerned not to see the "journal abuse."[59] In his opinion, the argument about intentions or "secret thoughts" was always unproductive; the only safe way to argue was "to assume that your adversary is honest." He also admitted that he read Kapterev's article "with great interest."

Pobedonostsev's advice seemed to be wise, but not to Nikolai Ivanovich, who took everything so seriously, who was surrounded by ill-wishers, and who, in his declining years, suffered defeat in the cause of his life. The professor fought, lamented, criticized, but all in vain. Subbotin's letters of the following years often read as lists of setbacks. Nobody was buying his journal, *Bratskoe Slovo*. When a new theological journal, *Bogoslovskii Vestnik* (Theological Messenger) appeared in 1892, Subbotin immediately informed his patron: there is an article by professor Golubinskii in the very first issue, in which Kapterev's opinion about two-finger sign of cross is presented as

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[58] Markov, *K istorii*, p. 481.
[59] Ibid., p. 483.

evident and proven. He adds: "I have already complained about it to our metropolitan, when I saw him: he turned a deaf ear."[60]

It was getting worse and worse. In 1899, one *Raskolnik* started a libel suit against Nikolai Ivanovich; the latter sought advice and defense from Pobedonostsev: "If it is possible, defend me, avert this new forthcoming conviction (and at the same time a new offence to the Orthodoxy) by your forceful mediation and by your influence in the Ministry of Internal Affairs."[61] Nikolai Ivanovich was so accustomed to taking attacks on the church personally, that gradually any personal attacks on him started to mean an "offence to the Orthodoxy." Pobedonostsev was unable to support him in this matter: he would not interfere in judicial procedures. Thus, after almost fifty years of incessant fighting, Subbotin bid farewell to his readers, stopped the polemic, and waited for the trial.

V. S. Markov, the editor of the volume of correspondence between Subbotin and Pobedonostsev, was Subbotin's sympathizer. In his commentary, he marveled at the union of these two people, the union of "force and power with knowledge and erudition." "People of the old order of life," they both matured under the rigid order of Nicholas I.[62] In their view, the Orthodoxy together with the state comprised the essence of the Russian nation. They brought these old inflexible convictions shaped in the 1840s into the new uncertain spiritual situation of the 1880s and started their deadly fight. Did they win or lose? They did win many petty battles, those that we described and many more, but lost the major one: freedom of conscience was proclaimed in Russia in 1905. When we contrast their activities of the 1880s with the artistic images of the schism created at the same time, the difference is striking.

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[60] Markov, *K istorii*, p. 553.
[61] Ibid., p. 614.
[62] Ibid., p. 17.

It would be wrong to regard N. I. Subbotin as an exceptional scoundrel. He simply held on to his convictions at the time of uncertainty. He continued to believe what each Russian official believed in the 1850s. Let us consider only one example. In a draft note, written in 1857, P. I. *Mel'nikov* warned the authorities that the new hierarchy in Belaia Krinitsa presented a "deadly threat" for Russia:

> What if we break off our relations with Austria and metropolitan Kirill will appear on the Russian soil in his ancient vestments in front of Austrian troops? What if he proclaims: "I come forth, people of ancient piety, under the protection of Austrian soldiers in order to cleanse the evil desolation in the Holy Kremlin of Moscow and in the whole Russian state?" Then, with his eight-sided cross he will bring us more harm than any carbines or improved Anglo-French siege-guns.[63]

This note shows genuine concern and fear that *Mel'nikov*—the official—experienced in the 1850s. His convictions changed, and in the early 1860s we see him propagating the equality of rights and enlightenment as the only necessary means for the eradication of the schism. The emphasis was transferred from political to cultural opposition. This change of mind may have cost *Mel'nikov* his career. We have already mentioned how the important job of classifying the documents concerning the schism was taken from *Mel'nikov* and given to F. V. Livanov, whose attitude to the *Raskol'niki* was utterly negative.

The fact that the authorities preferred Livanov to *Mel'nikov* confirms that the government was always apprehensive of the *Raskol'niki*. The authorities were certainly interested in what was going on among sectarians and Old Believers, but it was a hostile interest. We traced this kind of interest in the works of Liprandi, Nadezhdin, and young *Mel'nikov*; Subbotin inherited this kind of interest.

Famous Russian painter I. N. Kramskoi wrote in one of his letters in 1878 about the necessity to open new schools for young Russian artists. Who should support this enterprise? Kramskoi's answer is the following: "Either state if it is *Russian*, or *society if it exists*." He continues: "The state will not give anything because it is *not Russian*, and society will not give because it does not exist."[64] It is hard to agree with the thesis of society's non-existence, but one can easily understand why those members of the intelligentsia who dreamed about the creation of the true Russian society did not find any grain of Russianness in their state. State officials were so overwhelmed with standing guard over the old order, they could not be true members of the society. The problem with the schism is only one of many problems in which the profound gap between the state and the society can be clearly seen.

In the late nineteenth-early twentieth century several Russian religious philosophers (Berdiaev and Soloviev being the most notable figures) followed a similar path: from interest in socialism, to popular religious beliefs, and from them—to religious philosophy. Many memoirists wrote about the close friendship that connected Leskov and Soloviev in the 1870s and 1880s. It was just one example of how the interest in popular religiosity was passed to the new generation of Russian men of letters.

In the early eighties, Soloviev's lectures in Petersburg university became a huge sensation: he spoke like a prophet. According to one contemporary, "in the sixties, such a

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[63] Usov, "Pavel Ivanovich *Mel'nikov*," p. 176.

[64] *Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh vystavok. Pis'ma, dokumenty*, t. 1 (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1987): 161.

crowd could only be gathered for a lecture on physiology, in the seventies—on political economy, and in the beginning of the eighties almost all university youth hurried to listen a lecture on Christianity."[65] As Russia entered the twentieth century, the intelligentsia created several religious societies. Writers went to the countryside in order to see the sectarians, some stayed with them and shared their lives.

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[65] Quoted in: G. Florovsky *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1983): 310.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this work we characterized the period after the Crimean War and the Great Reforms as a time of Russian spiritual crisis. The humiliation caused by defeat in the war and radical social changes coincided with the crisis in the Orthodox Church. Taking place at the time of burgeoning nationalism, these dilemmas necessitated the redefining and reaffirming of the Russian national identity. Considering national identity as a process, this dissertation has examined the explosion of interest in the Old Belief in the 1860s-1880s as an aspect of this search for the "Russian idea."

On the part of the intelligentsia, it was an attempt to overcome the traditional juxtaposition of Russia and the West by immersion into authentic sources of Russianness. At the time of crisis, many men of letters looked into the past hoping that a return to the authentic Russian culture would save Russia from a constant orientation toward the West. *Raskol'niki*, the conservative rebels, for centuries holding out against the immense power of the state and the official church, attracted the attention of people from each part of the ideological spectre.

First and foremost, the dissertation has shown that this turn to history in search of identity was short-lived and futile. Why? The answer to this question should help us to understand better the nature of national identity. On a personal level, the major reason was that each author approached the popular subject with a ready-made set of terms and concepts, prompted by his previous engagements. A student of the Theological Academy, A. P. Shchapov has the words 'mnimyi' and 'lozhnyi'(ostensible and false) in stock due to his thorough theological education. With these words in mind, he could only walk the well-trodden path of presenting the history of the schism as the history of a theological mistake. But in the process of writing his book Shchapov gradually forgot about these words, and the last chapter contains a completely different interpretation of the phenomenon. By then he saw it as an expression of authentic Russian regional democracy, which opposed the unifying and modernizing efforts of the central government.

The tragic fate of Vasily Kel'siev showed how one of the first Russian professional revolutionaries tried to realize Shchapov's ideas by propagandizing among Old Believers. Kel'siev began by editing four volumes of government documents concerning the schism that were smuggled from Russia into London. Due to the lack of information on the subject, this publication of secret documents was extremely popular in Russia. In the introduction to this edition, Kel'siev relentlessly blamed the government for its cruelty and praised the Old Believers as rebels with all the zeal of a novice revolutionary. Again, Kel'siev borrowed revolutionary rhetoric for his interpretation of the schism.

It was only natural that Mel'nikov, who turned to writing novels about the schism after a long career of persecuting it, often used official phraseology in his descriptions of Old Believers. The features that Mel'nikov's novels emphasize in the portrayal of Old Believer nuns were utter stubbornness and stupidity. In his second novel, all his best heroes proved to be "politically correct" in seeing the correctness of the official church. In contrast, the images of sectarians (*Khlysty*) in his novels were mysterious and engaging. Considering the popularity of Mel'nikov's books, this might explain partly why the writers of the Silver Age period were much more interested in sectarians than in Old Believers.

Interestingly, the person who did analyze the schism in its own terms was the Russian literary pariah, N. S. Leskov. He did not belong to any of the ideological camps; he was in opposition to both the government and the opposition itself. Leskov wanted Russian people to live in peace with their "old fairytale," and for him the schism was a part of this fairytale. But despite the popularity of his stories, Leskov was never a dominant influence in Russian world of letters. His stories lacked the magnitude of Mel'nikov's novels; Leskov himself was stigmatized by journalists of the radical camp. That is why Mel'nikov's simplified approach was preferred to Leskov's solicitous reproduction of popular culture.

This leads us to the second important finding. This dissertation makes a distinction between the two lines in the interpretation of the Old Belief: the line of Mel'nikov and the line of Leskov. Mel'nikov's classifying and functional quasi-bureaucratic approach came to dominate Russian literature. With this victory, Old Belief could not be perceived as a representative of 'true Russianness' anymore. Interest in the past was lost altogether. The attention shifted to sects, especially the mystical ones.

It is no accident that one of the most popular books of the 1910s was A. Bely's *Silver Dove* (1909). The hero of this novel, a member of the intelligentsia, was seduced by a peasant woman, a member of a mystical sect of *Doves* (*Khlysty*). This novel was intended as the first part of the grandiose trilogy *East and West*. Clearly, *Silver Dove* returned to the same old juxtapositions, so characteristic for the Russian thought of the nineteenth century: "Russia and the West," "the people and the intelligentsia." It is also clear that members of the intelligentsia recognized this as a return to the same circle of questions in an attempt at national self-determination. In an article full of religious phraseology, published in the same year (1909), V. Ivanov speaks about "the mystical meaning" of the painful search for the Russian idea.[1] Obviously, this interpretation did not leave any place for interest in the past: unification of the people and the intelligentsia was to happen on some timeless mystical level.

One has to wonder whether popular attention can be fascinated with the past for a considerable period of time; it gets constantly distracted by daily problems and political realities. We traced a similar change of interest in Shchapov's intellectual biography. The political unrest in the country and factional squabbles among the intelligentsia prompted Shchapov to take a firm political stand and to clarify his concept. As a result, he became less and less interested in the Old Belief, more and more fascinated with sectarianism.

Although interest in the schism during the Silver Age period should be the subject of a separate study, it is evident that modernist artists create a stylization of popular religiosity.[2] Only in a few cases was this derived from interest in the Old Belief. More often, the Silver Age writers were thrilled with sectarians. If the Old Belief was evoked in literature, it was in company with sects, like some strange phenomena, interesting in their strangeness. An attentive observer of his time, one of the most popular and prolific writers of the period, P. D. Boborykin, noticed that the young intelligentsia was indifferent to Old Belief, whereas "sectarians were much more fascinating."[3] So it was not so much the Russian past, but Russian spiritual deviations that held the attention of artists of that period. Writers of the Silver Age were only partially concerned with the national image; they were constructing self-images. Leskov, despite his huge popularity, did not have an heir among those writers. Even M. Kuzmin, Leskov's ardent admirer, depicted the Old Belief as something unfeasible in the face of modernity.

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[1] V. I. Ivanov "O russkoi idee," *Po zvezdam: stat'i i aforizmy* (S-Peterburg: Ory, 1909): 318.
[2] See, for example, Plate VI, Nesterov's picture "On the Mountains" inspired by Mel'nikov's novel.
[3] P. D. Boborykin *Obmirshchenie* (Moskva: Sfinks, 1912): 147.

Contrary to the opinion of A. Etkind, it was proven that the distinction between the interpretations of Old Belief and sectarianism is necessary for an understanding of the changes in approaches to Russian national identity in the late nineteenth century. Yes in the period that interests Etkind the most, i. e., during the Silver Age, there was no such difference. All the world of popular religiosity was perceived indistinctively as a realm of mysticism. Although the attempt to come to a new self-awareness through exploring the past failed, one has to pay special attention to the attempt itself and to reasons for its failure. Why to be truly interested in the Old Belief did one have to be either a former Old Believer oneself (V. I. Surikov) or an outcast (N. S. Leskov, M. P. Musorgsky)?

The Great Reforms brought about the atmosphere of "glasnost" and reevaluation of the situation in Russia. Society grew accustomed to open discussions of many aspects of the Russian life that were previously taboo. But, on the one hand, the educated society was torn by factional contradictions; it did not tolerate independent opinions. On the other hand, society and the government never overcame the gap that existed between them, and history of the perception of the Old Belief is a grim example of the insuperability of this gap. All the rich images and interpretations stumbled over the same old administrative fear of the schism. The scar of the schism did not disappear.

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[1] After some hesitation I decided to use this edition rather than the "complete" collection of Leskov's works published in 1902-1903. The latter contains only works of fiction; letters and articles are not included. But I had to use the former (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*) too, because some of the "Jewish" stories were not included in the 1957 edition.

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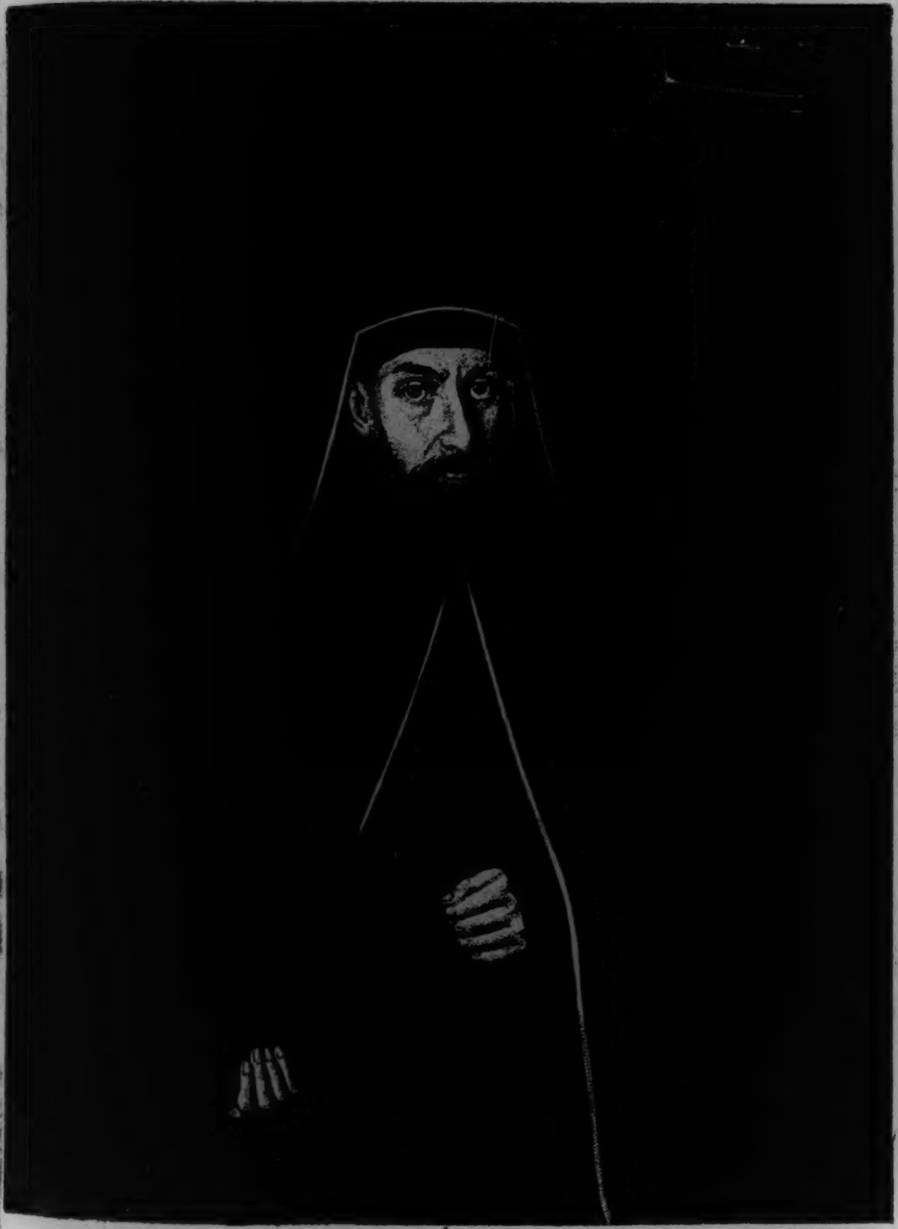

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PLATE I

Павелъ Васильевъ Инокъ.

Къ 484 стр. I тома Исторіи Бѣлокриницкой іерархіи

PLATE II

ὁ Μητροπολίτης Ἀμβρόσιος

PLATE III

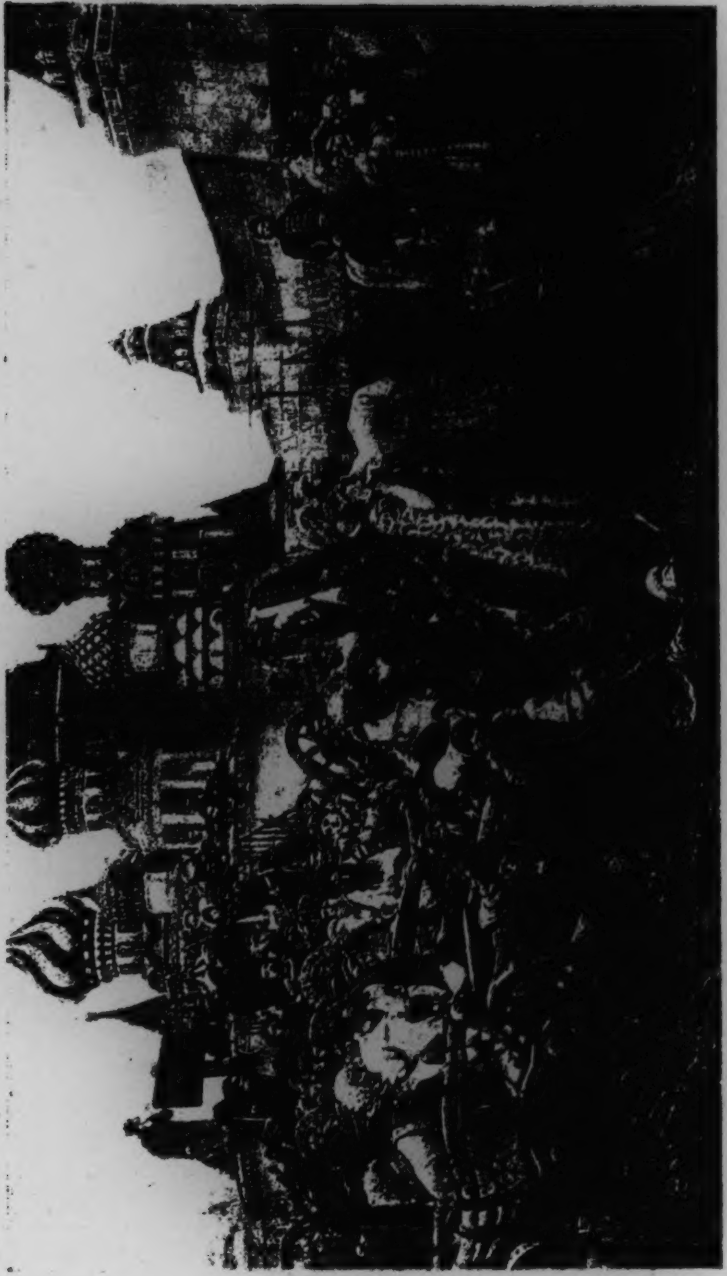

PLATE IV

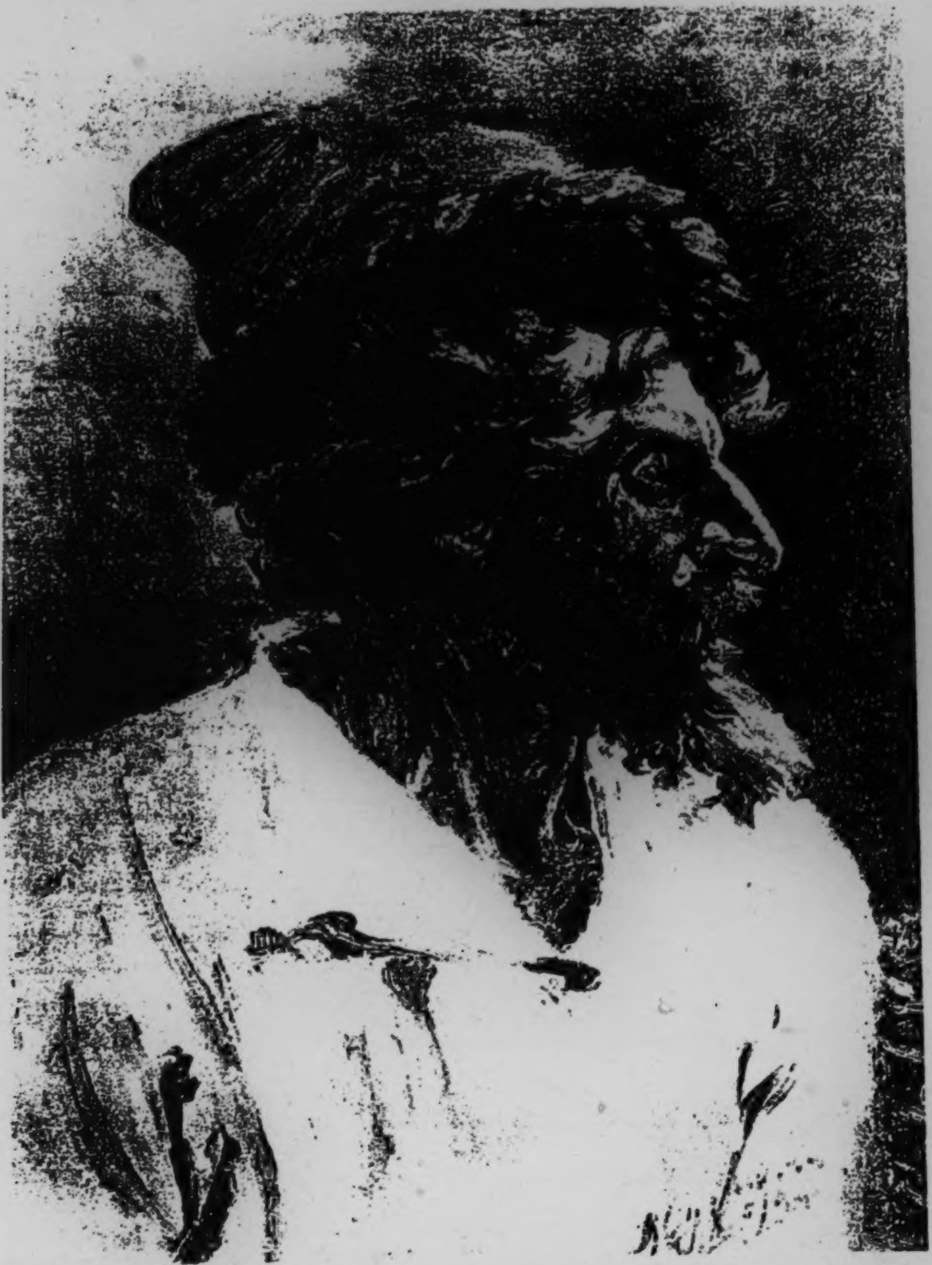

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PLATE V

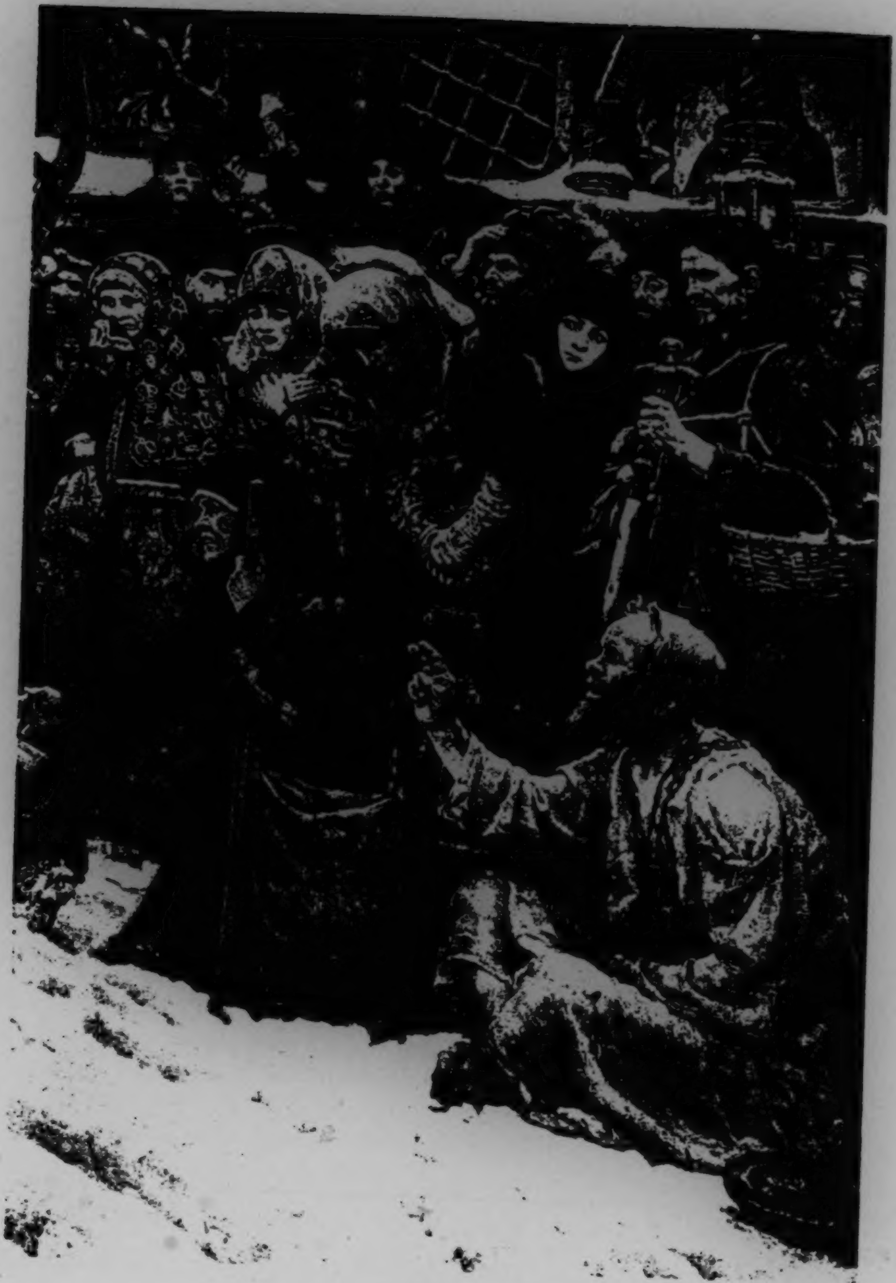

PLATE VI

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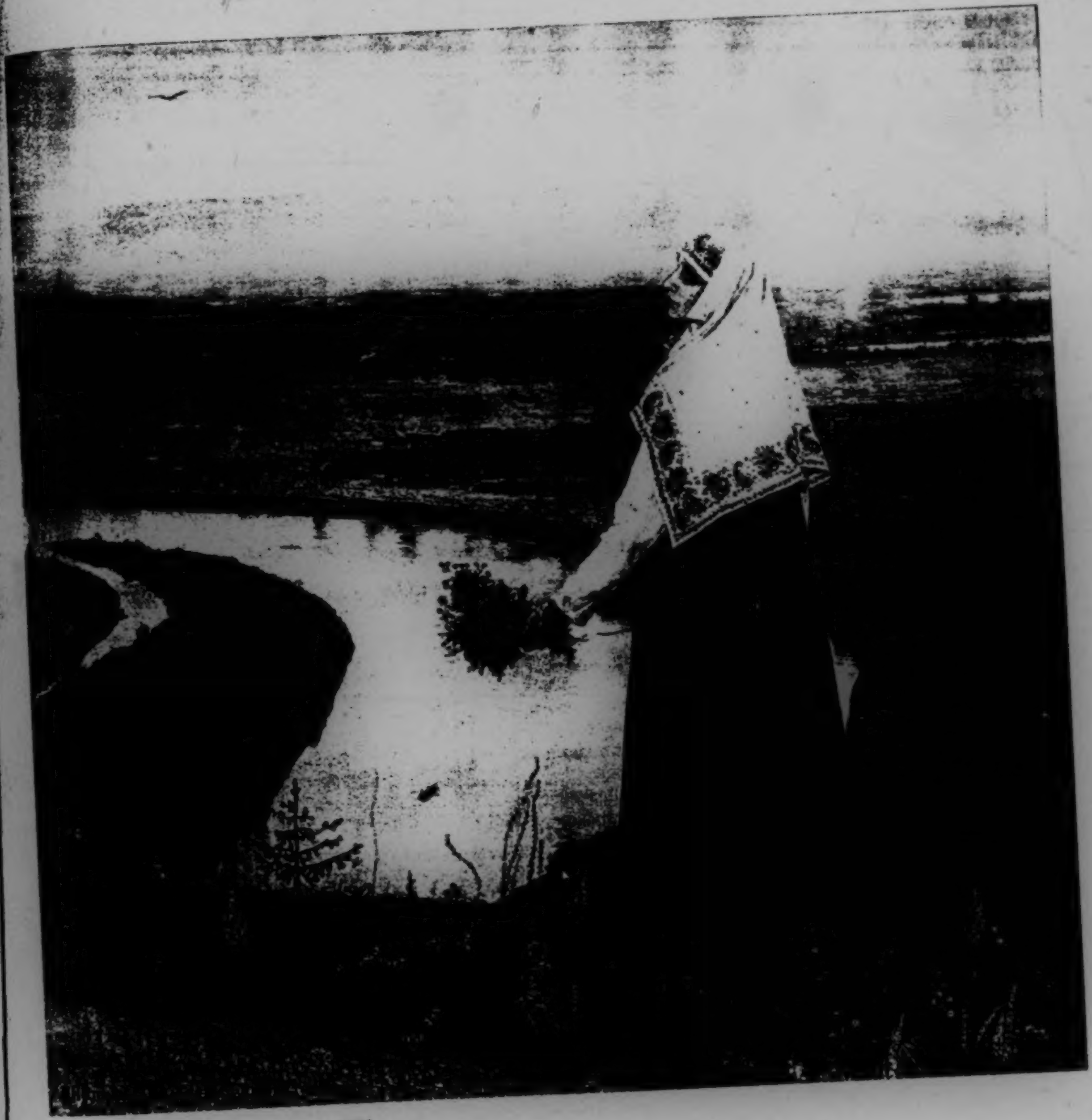
PLATE VII

Самосжигатели

Масло. 1884 г.

PLATE VIII



503[151] М. В. Нестеров. На горах. 1896

PLATE IX

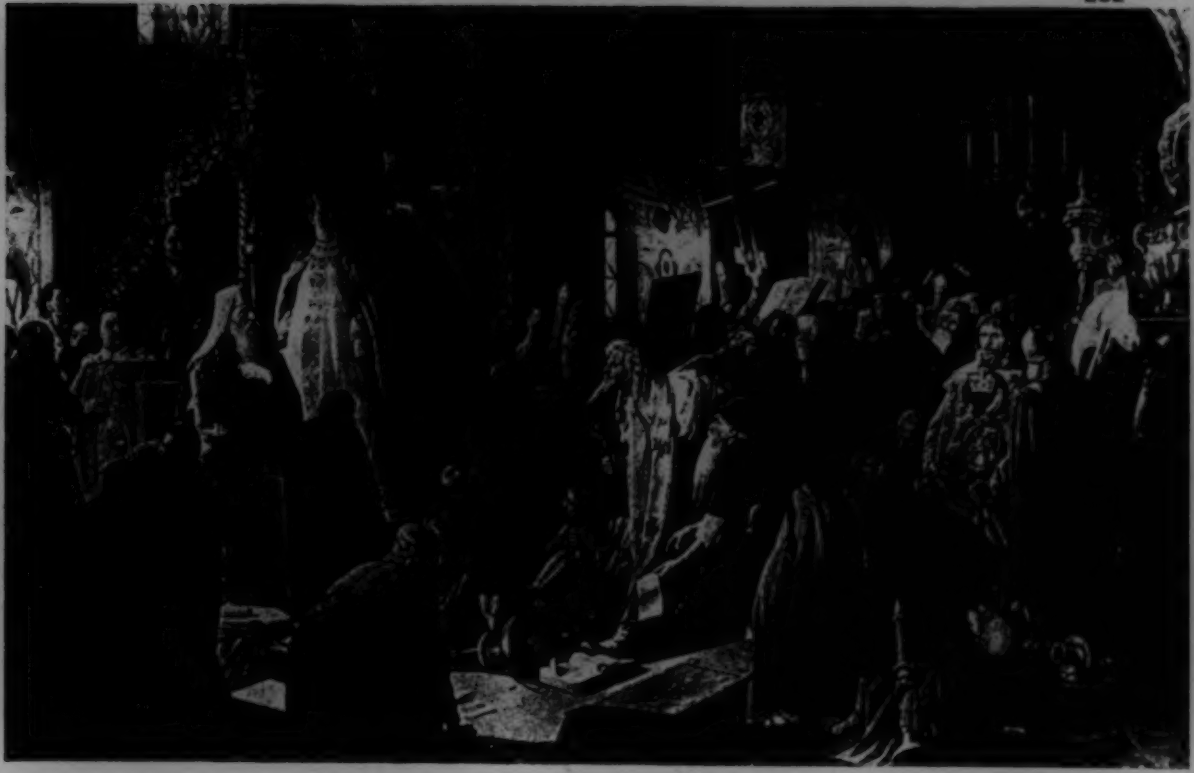


PLATE X